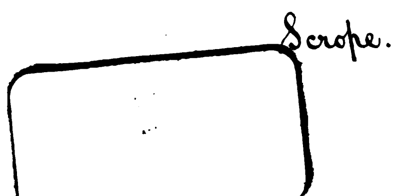

Scrope.

AN
(Du Barry, lit.)
Lamothe



Dubarry.

Madame du Barri.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

A Collection

OF THE

MOST INSTRUCTIVE AND AMUSING

LIVES

EVER PUBLISHED,

WRITTEN BY THE PARTIES THEMSELVES.

WITH BRIEF INTRODUCTIONS, AND COMPENDIOUS SEQUELS, CARRYING ON THE NARRATIVE TO THE DEATH OF EACH WRITER.

VOLUME XXXI.—MADAME DU BARRI.

LONDON:

WHITTAKER, TREACHER, AND ARNOT,

AVE-MARIA-LANE.

MDCCCXXX.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES,
Stamford-street.

MEMOIRS

OF

MADAME DU BARRI.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH,

BY THE TRANSLATOR OF "VIDOCQ."

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:
WHITTAKER, TREACHER, AND ARNOT,
AVE-MARIA-LANE.

MDCCCXXX.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

CHAPTER II.

CHAPTER III.

CHAPTER IX.

CHAPTER X.

CHAPTER XI.

CHAPTER XII.

CHAPTER XIII.

CHAPTER XIV.

CHAPTER XV.

CHAPTER XVI.

CHAPTER XVII.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CHAPTER XIX.

CHAPTER XX.

CHAPTER XXI.

CHAPTER XXII.

CHAPTER XIV.

CHAPTER XV.

CHAPTER XVI.

CHAPTER XVII.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CHAPTER XIX.

CHAPTER XX.

CHAPTER XXI.

CHAPTER XXII.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CHAPTER XXV.

CHAPTER XXVI.

CHAPTER XXVII.

CHAPTER XXXII.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

MEMOIRS

OF

MADAME DU BARRI.

CHAPTER I.

The countess is surrounded by candidates—Dauberval and the comtesse du Barri—Dauberval and madame de Flam—Molé—His absurdities—Mademoiselle Raucourt—Her first adventure—Madame de Mazarin and her lovers—The chevalier de Resseguier—The king and the comtesse du Barri—The marquis de Monteynard—Fresh intrigues—The statue of Voltaire—The English ambassador—Portrait of the maréchale de Mirepoix by madame du Deffant—A concluding remark.

Think not, my friend, that I was solely occupied in affairs relating to the monarchy; many little affairs, relative to private individuals, engrossed no small portion of my time. My drawing-room was never free from candidates and petitioners; females especially came to confide their troubles to me, and really they scarcely allowed me one moment's ease or respite. Most of the chagrins submitted to me either for cure or advice were those of the heart; indeed my numerous applicants seemed to take it for granted that I had a fellow-feeling in all such cases, and to redress injured lovers, &c., was my most chosen employment. Under these impressions mademoiselle Dubois, the actress, came to

relate her sorrows to me; she had been for fourteen or fifteen years attached to the handsome dancer Dauberval, but time rolled on, poor mademoiselle Dubois began to lose the first freshness of youth, and Dauberval, who certainly did not grow any younger either, was daily growing less and less attentive, till he seemed quite to have forgotten his once-loved friend. Mademoiselle came to me, and with many tears related her hard fate, and implored of me to interpose my authority with the unfaithful dancer to compel him to fulfil his promise of marrying her. I immediately sent to request Dauberval would come to me.

He soon arrived, buoyed up with vanity and conceit at the conquest he doubted not he had made of me; for in no other way would his self-love permit him to construe my request, that he would come to me without a moment's delay; and, with all the flippancy and presumption which he as a first-rate dancer, and moreover a man well looked upon by ladies in general, deemed so appropriate and becoming, he assured me he had flown upon the wings of impatience to my feet, where he would humbly await my further commands. I feigned not to understand him.

"Dauberval," said I, at last, "you are a charming dancer, and have made sad havoc in many a lady's heart; still, I would remind you of one who loves you tenderly, and would rather possess your affection than the treasures of the whole world."

"Ah, madam," cried he, his eyes filled with his audacious misconception of my words, "how happy should I be could I but flatter myself that the person of whom you speak did but partake of the lively sentiments which pervade my heart."

"Do you then know the lady to whom I allude, Dauberval?"

"Yes, madam, I do know her; how should I be ignorant of love such as hers? believe me, my delight at hearing I have had the good fortune to touch her heart, surpasses my poor attempts to describe it."

"Your sentiments enchant me," replied I; "the lady of whom I have told you desires no greater happiness; and, when you hear her name—"

"Nay, madam," answered Dauberval, "you need not pronounce her name, my heart tells me who is the lovely object. Oh! permit me—"

Dauberval waited but for one encouraging glance to throw himself at my feet.

"Enough, monsieur Dauberval," said I, with an air of cool dignity, "there remains then no obstacle to your marriage with mademoiselle Dubois, the expenses of which I will defray."

"What, madam!" exclaimed the disconcerted opera dancer; "were you alluding to mademoiselle Dubois?"

"And of whom else could you suppose, sir, I was speaking?" replied I, with the look and majesty of a queen. "I presume your vanity did not mislead you so far as to fancy I was proposing some lady of the court for your acceptance!"

Dauberval, confused and thrown off his guard, knew not what to reply; and the rapid changes of his complexion bespoke the mortification with which he contemplated the downfal of his air-built fancies.

"Yes, Dauberval," cried I, "that excellent creature loves you, and is well worthy of the tenderness you but now expressed for her. Justice and parental affection both conspire to claim the accomplishment of your promise, and I trust, for the sake of the child she has borne you, you will no longer delay making her your wife."

"Ah, madam," returned Dauberval, "if you urge me to marry her only on the child's account, give yourself no further concern, I pray of you."

"And why not?"

"Because it is no more mine than yours."

"How, Dauberval, deny your relationship to the poor infant? This is neither fair nor honourable."

"Madam," answered he, "I deny nothing; but I strongly doubt, and that is sufficient. I conjure you

not to insist upon my marrying mademoiselle Dubois; she could not be happy with me."

"You are very silly, Dauberval."

"I was so, madam," returned he, "a few minutes since, but the marriage you now press upon my acceptance abundantly punishes me for a moment's folly."

Perceiving that all my representations were in vain, I dismissed Dauberval without feeling any offence at his resistance to my wishes; for, after all, I had no right to force the man to marry against his inclinations. Still, I could not help admiring the self-sufficiency of this follower of Terpsichore, who could not receive a summons to attend me without imagining I was in love with him; but after all, the coxcomb did but confuse me with the generality of the females at court, and I forgave him his mistake.

Dauberval had just met with a very amusing adventure, which furnished matter for comment and scandal to all the gossip-mongers of Versailles. A lady, madame de Flam, had conceived for him a passion which she styled a sentimental regard; she frequented the opera only to watch the appearance of the handsome dancer, and to hail his appearance with the most enthusiastic bursts of applause. She next wrote to him, invited him to call upon her, and progressively admitted him as her lover. Meanwhile the prince de Condé, struck by the beauty of madame de Flam, began to despise those charms poor madame de Monaco had vainly flattered herself would bind him to her for ever, and sighed for the affections of the lovely madame de Flam. This lady, at first entirely absorbed in her passion for Dauberval, would listen to no overtures from the prince; however, after the siege had lasted several days, she began to reflect upon the advantages that must arise from holding in her chains a prince of the blood, how it would advance her interest at court, &c., till at length she reasoned herself into the necessity of yielding to the prince's ardour, and poor Dauberval was laid aside.

This latter, who was but little accustomed to such speedy neglect, took upon himself to be jealous. He began by suspecting the dreadful truth, and he finished by ascertaining the fact. Rage and jealousy overpowered him, and had it been possible for an opera-dancer to have expired of grief, Dauberval would certainly have gone to the shades below. On the other hand, the quick perception of madame de Monaco easily pointed out to her, that her unfaithful lover had falsified his vows, and was even forgetting her in the arms of another. No pains or trouble were omitted on her part to discover the rival who had thus successfully disputed the heart of her recreant lover. Nor was it long ere she detected in the new mistress of the prince de Condé madame de Flam, whom she had supposed, in common with the rest of the court, solely engrossed by Dauberval. She instantly desired the attendance of this gentleman, and, by the aid of 500 louis, which she had borrowed of me through the medium of the comtesse de Valentinois, she drew from him not only every particular relative to the intrigue carried on between himself and madame de Flam, but the letters which had passed between them, and his promise to join in any scheme for the detection and punishment of the unfaithful fair.

Dauberval thus secured, madame de Monaco no longer affected ignorance of the affair, but displaying the letters she had obtained to the astonished prince, she offered to put the matter beyond a doubt, by taking him where he might see his mistress and his contemptible rival together—a challenge which the prince did not hesitate to accept, from the certainty he felt that madame de Flam was being traduced by the assertion of her having any intimacy with an opera-dancer.

Now madame de Flam, when she accepted his serene highness, had by no means struck the handsome Dauberval off her books; on the contrary, the prince gratified her vanity, the other her fancy. Dauberval, in pursuance of a scheme arranged between himself and

madame de Monaco, proposed to madame de Flam to take a little private excursion with him, offering to show her a beautiful garden, which was at his disposal, in the faubourg Saint Antoine. Madame de Flam, wholly unsuspicious of the trick meditated by her revengeful lover, easily consented. She accordingly visited this garden, and, after viewing it till both complained of weariness, sought temporary rest in a pavilion. Just as the happy pair were dwelling upon the happiness of passing their lives for ever in so sweet a spot as this, and just as they were about to vow eternal fidelity in a loving embrace, the prince de Condé suddenly stood before them. After a scene, full of reproaches and recriminations, the lady was compelled to retreat from the pavilion, and to force her way alone through a crowd of gaping spectators, brought thither by the servants of the prince de Condé. Dauberval, as had been agreed on, was suffered to depart unmolested; and, from the moment the story became generally known, there was no end to his good fortune and success both in his profession and in his love affairs.

There existed at this period a sort of mania even among the most distinguished ladies of the court to fall in love with actors. Molé, for instance, knew not where to hide himself; he had not a single instant allowed him for leisure, or liberty to breathe alone. This man was always kept by five or six females at once. He said one evening in the green-room of the *Comédie Française*, before more than twenty spectators, "I am the only man in the world perhaps who is not imposed upon by those who supply his household with the different articles required, and I always take care to select the purveyors to my family from the most respectable I can find: madame d'Egmont has the care of supplying my wine-cellar; my table is under the direction of the princesse de Kinski; mesdames de Langeac and de Vau—— have the charge of attending to the furniture of my house; mesdames d'Orvil—— and de Saint P—— take care of my private wardrobe;

my theatrical one is the province of the princesse de H—— and mademoiselle Guimard, and so on with all other divisions of the establishment: every thing I require is supplied with an exactitude that saves me all fuss, trouble, or contention, and, what is still better, all expense likewise."

This was a boast for the uttering of which the speaker well deserved to have been thrown out of window, yet every one admired and applauded the coxcomb who could thus degrade himself. If at any time it chanced that any person had need of a slip of paper when this creature was by, he would pull out of his pocket a mass of letters written in different female hands, and, taking the first, without regarding whether the signature or writing might be recognised, he would coolly toss it to whoever chose to avail themselves of it. My brother-in-law, d'Hargicourt, told me, that happening to be in a tobacconist's shop with Molé, he heard him say, after having selected several articles, "You will set these down to the account of the marquise de l'Hôpital, she pays for these kind of trifles."

Molé had not forgotten my own imprudent admiration of him. Whenever he found himself alone with me he heaved piteous sighs, accompanied with such glances! Had this mode of attack continued much longer it might have compromised my character at court; I saw this, and determined to put an end to the affair. To have intrusted this delicate commission to the hands of a third person would not have answered my purpose, and even comte Jean, from his violence and impetuosity, was not to be trusted. I saw therefore, that the only safe plan would be to speak for myself; I therefore signified to Molé my desire to see him in private.

He came with the same insolent and presuming air Dauberval had worn, and evidently actuated by the same extravagant hope of seeing the mistress of the king of France descend from her high station to listen to the flattery of a knight of the sock and buskin. My

cold and frigid reception restored the presumptuous actor to his senses. I began by reproving Molé for his unthinking conduct.

"I admire your talent," added I, "but do not allow your vanity to mislead you as to the extent of my partiality for you, or I may otherwise be compelled to desire the duc de la Vrillière to send you a certain letter—you understand me?"

"Ah, madam," cried Molé, "that would be a death blow to all Paris. The men are delighted to witness my efforts on the boards of our theatres, and the women—"

"Molé," said I, interrupting him, "no more of this; you are both a coxcomb and a simpleton. Have a care how you utter these impertinent speeches. See, here is the price of a new dress, which you may wear the next time you play the part of 'the boaster,' (*le glorieux*)." Upon which I presented Molé with fifty louis and dismissed him.

From that period he conducted himself more circumspectly towards me, nor had I ever after occasion to repeat my reproof. I lost no opportunity of evincing my satisfaction at his improved behaviour by assisting him in his profession to the best of my ability, and by aiding him upon all occasions with my credit at court.

The appearance of mademoiselle de Raucourt upon the boards of the theatre about the close of the year 1772 caused a powerful sensation in Paris. This lady was the daughter of a man named Saucerotte, who kept an eating-house, and was considered the most perfect paragon of beauty that had shone in the dramatic hemisphere for many a day; her acting was tame and inanimate, but her matchless charms drew down upon her that enthusiastic applause and favour she would never have obtained but for their dazzling aid. What materially increased the general infatuation, was the report of her immaculate reputation and strictly virtuous principles. She announced her intention of reforming theatrical manners, by preserving herself as chaste and

pure as though she had never visited so corrupt a place as a French theatre. It was generally understood that her heart and hand would both be disposed of together, and that no man but him who sought her as his wife need sue for her favour. Sentiments so novel as these, however, did not last very long; and, if green-room reports may be credited, the first lover of the fair tragedian was a young and handsome water-carrier, styled by his comrades *mademoiselle*, from the light and delicate style of his beauty. Love, which is never better pleased than in bringing about all manner of absurdities, inspired mademoiselle de Raucourt with an indulgent predilection for this youth she had never felt for any of the rich suitors by whom she was beset. However, the young duc de Bourbon, then scarcely in his twentieth year, and singularly handsome, was seized with a violent passion for the seducing actress, of whom every one was raving; and, quitting mademoiselle Duthé, he hastened to throw himself at the feet of mademoiselle Raucourt, who, with the connivance and assistance of her exemplary father, sold to the young prince, at an exorbitant price, those favours she had so lavishly and gratuitously bestowed upon the humble water-carrier, who, enraged at the slight shown him in the introduction of a rival, took upon himself to be very jealous, and threatened revenge, as if the affair were an uncommon one. "Hark ye, *mademoiselle*," said Raucourt, "take up your buckets and begone, recollecting the honour that has been shown you, in suffering you to take precedence of a prince of the blood;" and thus finished the low tale of the poor water-carrier.

Meanwhile mademoiselle Raucourt was not long ere she rendered herself, by the profligacy and licentiousness of her manners and conduct, wholly unworthy of the lively interest I felt for her, and compelled me to withdraw my protection from her. You know, my friend, how justly she drew upon her the reproaches and censure of your sex, and I have heard the most horrid stories related of her; but the subject is not a

pleasant one, so, with your permission, I will leave her to the fate she so well deserved.

Irregularity of life was not, however, confined to those of a theatrical profession. Still, I believe, and am bound to assert it, that during the last fifteen years, the manners of our fashionable ladies have greatly improved. I was one evening amusing myself with the maréchale de Mirepoix, drawing out a list of the lovers belonging to various females of our acquaintance; the duchesse de Mazarin no longer kept any account of the number of her admirers; besides many who were on the free list, she had several whom she herself paid, and to crown all, she had one protecting friend who supported the whole party, *and conducted the affairs of her household.*

The present occupier of this last-named and enviable post, was a man of whom I had seen much in my early youth: his name was Radix St. Foix, a money-broker, witty, yet gross and vulgar as the groom who followed him; generous as a prince, and equally remarkable for his conceit, and the extreme shortness of his arms, which were strikingly out of proportion with the rest of his body. His predecessor had been M. de Montayet, archbishop of Lyons, one of the most abandoned prelates of the kingdom, not even excepting M. de Jarente himself. Whilst the duchess was engaged with these affairs of gallantry she had given birth to a daughter, who, upon arriving at a sufficient age, it was the ardent wish of her friends, should marry the comte d'Agenais, son to the duc d'Aiguillon. Some wits of the day profited by the circumstance to send the following card to at least two thousand people—" The archbishop of Lyons and M. Radix de Saint Foix beg to apprize you of the marriage of their daughter and daughter-in-law with the marquis d'Aiguillon."

These abominable jokes were frequently played off. There was, both at court and in the city, a set of profligates, who thought of nothing else but similar tricks

and follies. However, their absurdities amused the king, who strictly forbade M. de Sartines from interfering with them, saying, "You must not annoy or disturb persons, who are guilty of no other crime than amusing themselves with the follies of individuals; the thing is of little consequence, nor is the safety of the kingdom at all affected by it; on the contrary, it is an excellent means of diverting general attention from political discussions."

His majesty did not take, with the same coolness, the jokes, pamphlets, *bon mots*, &c., which, as he asserted, were aimed at him, whilst professedly directed against the government, and the appearance of a fresh epigram upon the new mode of government was sufficient to put him in ill-humour for the whole day. A fresh culprit appeared, charged with this last-named offence; the writer of the offending lines was a chevalier de Resseguier, a man of great sense, of whom I have spoken in a preceding letter. He was dining one fast-day at the house of M. de Sartines; several dishes of fish, of a more than ordinary size, having been served up, one of the company exclaimed at their being so large.

"They are indeed fine fish," said Marin, (editor of the *Gazette de France*, since so cleverly managed by Beaumarchais,) "but I dined yesterday with the president, and we had still larger."

"Oh, I am not at all surprised at that," replied the chevalier de Resseguier, "it is the place for every thing monstrous."

The allusion was so evident, that the lieutenant of police was perfectly embarrassed, while the rest of the party laughed heartily.

The speech was quickly circulated throughout Paris, and I lost no time in reporting it to the king, by way of a joke upon the chancellor. Louis XV. shrugged up his shoulders, saying,

"This Resseguier is incorrigible; he has already been confined once in the Bastille, and he seems very deserving of paying it a second visit."

"Nay, sire," said I, "it would be too bad to send an honest man to prison twice in his life; but why was the chevalier ever sent there?"

"For a similar piece of folly to that you have just related of him; he had the audacity to write some satirical verses upon the marquise de Pompadour, for which he was very deservedly recompensed by a lodging in the Bastille. However, his brother, a very sensible man, member and clerk of the parliament of Toulouse, learning the chevalier's misfortune, came post to Paris, obtained an interview with madame de Pompadour, and prevailed on her to pardon his thoughtless relative. Furnished with the order for his brother's discharge, the abbé Resseguier repaired to the Bastille, and restored the chevalier to liberty. As they were proceeding through the streets of Paris in the abbé's carriage, the latter began to give his indiscreet charge some good and wholesome advice, but the volatile chevalier no sooner perceived his intention, than putting his head out of the coach window, he exclaimed to the coachman, *Remenez-moi aux carrières!* The astonished abbé renewed his remonstrances, but his thoughtless brother put an end to all further rebuke, by taking upon himself, first to reproach the abbé with having demeaned himself by asking any favour of madame de Pompadour, and then, opening the coach door, left him to his own meditations, whilst he returned, not to the Bastille, but to plunge more deeply than ever into the follies of Paris."

This anecdote greatly amused me, and I observed to Louis XV.,

"The chevalier de Resseguier is a very agreeable, sensible man, and I think it was very cruel of the marquise de Pompadour to imprison him, merely for having written a miserable epigram; but to what did he allude, sire, when he exclaimed, *Qu'on me remène aux carrières?*"

"My sweet friend," answered the king, "it refers to an historical fact, and I must tell you, that in such

matters the marchioness was more at home than yourself. Dionysius, tyrant of Syracuse, (for in those days tyrant was equivalent to our appellation of king,) Dionysius the tyrant, then, had read some verses of his own composing to a young man who condemned them as execrable. For this want of good taste he was condemned to the *carrières*, a sort of Syracusan bastille. When Dionysius fancied that this lesson must have sufficiently opened the mind of the critic to the beauties of his poetry, he sent for him from prison; and, the better to judge of the improvement it had worked in him, began to read over to him a fresh poem of his own composition. It would seem that the obstinate man still remained deaf to their merit; for, turning round abruptly to the captain of the prince's guards, he exclaimed, *Take me back to the Carrières*. Now, my dear countess, I trust you perfectly comprehend the words of the chevalier de Resseguier."

The king, enchanted with this display of his erudition, rubbed his hands with much complacency; then, all at once resuming his former ill humour, he exclaimed, "All these provincial people are possessed of a very dangerous and refractory spirit; they are neither to be softened by rewards nor intimidated with punishments; for that reason I have always dreaded the parliaments of Bretagne, Dauphine, and Languedoc, more than my old parliament in Paris."

"And the new one," cried I, "do you fear that, sire?"

"Which, the Maupeou parliament? Oh, no."

"Ah, sire," returned I, "why do you style it the Maupeou parliament? You speak of it as contemptuously as the rest of Paris."

"Why, honestly speaking," answered he, "I cannot say I feel a very great esteem for it. It is composed of persons, who only joined my party in consideration of the sums they received for their assistance, and far too well have they been paid."

"Ah," cried I, laughing, "I see how it is; you

dislike them because they have cost you too high a price!" and the king joined in the laugh as heartily as myself.

In the midst of conversations so apparently trifling and unimportant as this, I was contriving the means of advancing the most important intrigues: for instance, at this very moment, I was labouring to procure the dismissal of the marquis de Monteynard from the department of the war-office, of which he had been made minister, although I had solicited the post for the duc d'Aiguillon. The king was very partial to the marquis, who, it must be allowed, if not gifted with superior genius, was yet indefatigable in discharging the duties of his office, and actuated by the sincerest desire of doing right. The duc d'Aiguillon greatly desired to be at the head of the war-office; and, in concert with Messieurs de la Vrillière and de Dayne, I importuned Louis XV. to gratify my friend. Speaking of the matter one day to the duc d'Ayen, the king said,

"I see that Monteynard must go out, for he has not a single supporter except myself."

"Truly, sire," replied the malignant duke, "your majesty's recommendation has but little weight at court now-a-days, nor does it possess much greater value in the cabinets of ministers. A short time since I made use of your majesty's name, when addressing M. Cromot upon matters connected with the state, but scarcely could I induce even his clerk to listen to me. Just then came in a young protégé of his, the chevalier d'Arc; the greatest attention was lavished on this person, whilst I, employed upon your majesty's business, was compelled to wait in humble silence till his pleasure was made known, and every arrangement concluded according to his wishes."

The king repeated to me what he had heard from the duc d'Ayen, vowing that M. de Monteynard should on no account go out of office.

The M. de Cromot of whom the duc d'Ayen spoke was a rude and impertinent man, who used rose-coloured

powder in his hair, and was for ever boasting of his genealogy, which he affected to trace back to some Roman consul.* Spite of this folly, M. de Cromot was a man of sense and great riches; as may be supposed, when I tell you, that he had never less than five or six mistresses at a time, to each of whom he allowed from 40,000 to 50,000 francs a year. The old simpleton expended nearly as much money as the king's mistress could have done.

In vain had Louis XV. vowed that M. de Monteynard should not go out of office; I would soon have settled that point without the aid of any person, but it chanced that I had a powerful auxiliary in madame Louise, who perhaps, without intending to do so, assisted me materially. She wrote from her calm retreat in the convent, whither she had retired, assuring the king that the marquis was a philosopher at heart, and secretly devoted to the encyclopedists. This was not really correct, but it succeeded with Louis XV., who could not endure those "stirrers up of the age," as he styled them, and so the poor marquis was dismissed.

Apropos of these "unquiet spirits," as the king styled them; have I mentioned to you the subscription for a statue intended by d'Alembert to be raised to the memory of Voltaire? We well knew at the château that all who subscribed to this statue would incur the displeasure of Louis XV., yet not one of us ventured to refuse our signature and subscription when asked for them; of course I did as the others, for which the king severely blamed me.

"Mercy upon me, sire," cried I, "how could I have acted otherwise? the philosophers would have had an

* Madame du Barri alludes here to some popular word or phrase we cannot now understand. Her acquaintance with the Roman consuls was doubtless as limited as her knowledge of the kings of Syracuse.—EDITOR'S NOTE.

excellent opportunity of pulling me to pieces had I refused."

"That is precisely what I dread," answered Louis XV., "and you may depend upon it I shall oppose the triumph of these impious beings to the utmost stretch of my ability. Let as many as please subscribe to this statue, I cannot help their so doing, but it shall never be erected in any public situation so long as I am a king."

Since I have promised you, my friend, to lay my whole heart before you, I will confess that a slight degree of political wisdom was mingled with the public testimony I had just afforded of my admiration for Voltaire. I considered that the life of Louis XV. was precarious. Upon the succession of the dauphin and dauphiness, the latter strongly attached to M. de Choiseul, would not fail to procure his return to court; Voltaire and his friends were in great esteem with the duc de Choiseul, so that, by keeping well with them, I was paving the way for their support and protection when the future arrived, which presented but a gloomy prospect for me. Oh, my friend, who could have persuaded me in my youthful days that I should ever learn to weigh each action in the scale of interest? Still there were moments, when divesting myself of the vexatious ideas caused by the many disagreeables which threatened me, I caught myself smiling at the idea, that, in concert with foreign ambassadors and the ministers of the realm, I was directing the most momentous affairs.

Fancy me surrounded by the pope's nuncio, the archbishop de Damas, comte de Mercy Argenteau, the Austrian ambassador, viscount Stormond, M. Moncenigo, and all the train of diplomatists, either great or small, belonging to the foreign courts. How well did I imitate the craftiness of that most subtle of all courtiers, Moncenigo! How coolly and reservedly did I treat the phlegmatic lord Stormond, who sought to

gain me over to the English interests. This nobleman was for ever annoying me with his presence, and for some time I could not divine the reason of his odious assiduity. At last, he very bluntly explained to me, that his court were anxious to confer on me proofs of the friendship entertained for me, in the substantial form of a yearly present, worthy both of their bestowing and my receiving. "My lord," answered I, in a severe tone, "she who is honoured by the friendship of the king of France is rich enough to make presents, and esteems herself too highly to receive any."

I repeated this conversation to the maréchale de Mirepoix, who replied,

"Ah, this fine romantic, disinterested generosity tells very well sometimes, but it is decidedly out of place in your case. We should never refuse the presents of a friend, far less those of an enemy. It is good policy to take all we can from our foes; we only impoverish them, and lessen their resources."

"What!" exclaimed I, "would you have had me betray the king's confidence, by becoming a pensioner on the English court?"

"Heaven preserve me," cried she, "from giving you such advice, but you might just have condescended to receive their bright shining guineas; they would only have cost you a few smooth words."

"No, no," returned I, "that would be cheating; and something within me whispers, that a young and pretty woman should deceive none but her lover."

The poor maréchale really thought of nothing but money; indeed it was a thing she had always constant need of. Independently of the large sums she lost at cards, she always required it for the purchase of baubles and gewgaws, for which, when they took her fancy, she would pay the most exorbitant prices. Her taste for expense was unbounded; and things, the most superfluous and unnecessary to others, became to her objects of the most vital importance.

When we had tired ourselves with discussing the

conduct and character of lord Stormond, she gave me a paper to read, containing her portrait as it had been sketched many years previously by the pen of madame du Deffant. As I have so frequently introduced the maréchale de Mirepoix in the course of my letters, I presume you will have no objection to reading the article in question. It began as follows:—

"Zelia is so modest, so unobtrusive and retiring, that at first sight we perceive little to praise, except that which immediately strikes the eye—the surpassing loveliness of her person; her countenance is beautiful, and her figure light and elegant: nature has further bestowed on her a pure and dazzling complexion, and a hand white and fair as polished marble. Her features, taken separately, are not perfect, but their union is a combination of all that is beautiful and expressive. These are the only praises we should think due to Zelia at our first interview.

"But, as further acquaintance brought us more together, the worth of Zelia would become fully known. Like the rest of her sex she possesses a natural desire to please; but this feeling is not coquetry with her, it is that genuine and benevolent desire to contribute to the happiness and promote the comfort of others, which is known in the world under the name of politeness. Thus she escapes the jealousy of her own sex; and the most presumptuous of the other sex would not dare annoy her with insulting flattery and unmeaning compliments. So calm, so peaceful, is the style of her beauty, that it represses all unholy desires, while her simple and innocent manners preserve her from the consequences of despair. Her conversation partakes of the same character as her beauty—sparkling, yet mild and uniform: when Zelia speaks, nothing that she utters appears to surprise or astonish us; but her manner of expressing herself is so agreeable, and to the purpose, that we are never weary of listening to her. Let it not be supposed, however, that Zelia is deficient in understanding or wit; far from it; but such is the timidity

with which she shrinks from admiration, that she only ventures on a playful observation in an under tone, so as to lead people to suppose she is not often wont to express herself so freely.

"I will add but one word more; Zelia is generous, compassionate, and affable, endowed with manners the most winning; and, to complete her picture, she possesses as many virtues as rare and amiable qualities."

Whilst I was reading this portrait, the maréchale shrugged up her shoulders, and when I laid it down she burst into a laugh, exclaiming, "Don't believe a word of that, my dear; I was young then, and a favourite with madame du Deffant; besides, I was ignorant of courts, and if ever my portrait resembled me, most certainly the likeness has long since disappeared."

The maréchale sighed as she uttered these last words, and with reason; she was indeed changed since the panegyric I had been perusing was written. She, who was there depicted as generous and compassionate, had now become covetous and selfish, possessing only so much sensibility and sympathy for the woes of others, as warned her not to expose herself to similar dangers. In fact, that change had been effected in her which we all experience; for, in my opinion, age lays the same withering hand upon our hearts and feelings as upon our features.

CHAPTER II.

The duc de Cossé Brissac—The opinion of the duc d'Aiguillon respecting that nobleman—Conversation with the maréchale de Mirepoix—Letter to madame de Mirepoix from the duc de Cossé—An excursion in the forest of Fontainebleau—"A fit of pastoral meditation"—A meeting with a dangerous enemy—The letter—My reply—A conversation—The king—Madame de Mirepoix.

I FEAR I have almost wearied your patience in thus long dwelling upon the affairs of others; I will now terminate my digressions by resuming the proper thread of my narrative, and again speaking of my own immediate actions and concerns with the same candour and ingenuousness, of which I have furnished such abundant proofs in the course of these letters. I cannot expect to be praised for the invariable prudence or propriety of my actions, but I may safely claim that indulgence which is promised to those who truly and sincerely confess the faults of which they heartily repent. You will judge by this long preface that I have some fresh error to acknowledge; but, my friend, I pray your patient hearing ere you condemn me, and request you will lay aside the stern severity of the judge, whilst I proceed to relate, what, I flatter myself, will not either excite your indignation or lower me in your esteem. You are not one of those pitiless censors of our sex, who frown alike on errors of the head or heart; had you been so, I should never have selected you as the depositary of my confidence; and, surely, if any excuse can be urged in favour of a woman's weakness, 'tis when the susceptibility of her heart, and tenderness of her nature, are called forth by a true and genuine pas-

sion for one well deserving her love. Ah! had I no other fault to reproach myself with than this!

When first I had the good fortune to attract the king's regard, I did not find the duc de Cossé Brissac amongst those courtiers who crowded around me with their flattering admiration. I remarked this defection with much regret, for the duke was spoken of as one of the most accomplished noblemen of the day. My female friends extolled him for fine person, and his brave and noble disposition; whilst, by the other sex, he was equally commended for his frank, disinterested conduct, and the solidity of his judgment. All these encomiums excited my lively curiosity to satisfy myself, whether the original really deserved all that was said in his behalf. But still M. de Cossé made no attempts for an introduction to me, and I knew not whether he were one of the Choiseul party or not; yet, with a perseverance unaccountable even to myself, I continued to make inquiries respecting him wherever an opportunity presented itself of learning any particulars relative to him.

I told you but just now, that every person spoke in the most enthusiastic terms of the duc de Cossé; I ought, however, to have excepted the duc d'Aiguillon, who hated M. de Brissac with a hatred arising from a secret jealousy of his many virtues, and the consciousness of his possessing every advantage which M. d'Aiguillon so vainly toiled to procure for himself. In the first place, the reputation of M. de Cossé was irreproachable, whilst that of M. d'Aiguillon had received an irreparable shock in the affair of Bretagne. Every one was anxious to do justice to the former, but all delighted in slandering and misrepresenting the latter. The faults of M. de Brissac, when allowed to be such, found a ready excuse, whilst the different actions of M. d'Aiguillon were spitefully exaggerated. However, the duc d'Aiguillon contrived to veil his animosity so skilfully, that he who was the object of it, entertained not the slightest suspicion of the fact.

Courtly custom does not admit of an open declaration of war, the system of hostility consists in undermining the enemy's interests, without allowing him to suppose a foe is near. Acting upon this principle, M. d'Aiguillon left no means untried of injuring the duc de Cossé in my opinion, relating to me various disreputable anecdotes of him, and repeating the most disgraceful things as having been said by the duc de Cossé against me. I listened and believed, wondering greatly at the determined malice with which M. de Brissac seemed to regard me; a feeling which was so much the more unjustifiable, as I had never given him the slightest cause of complaint, and was in my heart sufficiently well-disposed towards him. However, thanks to the artifices of the duc d'Aiguillon, I became in the end more incensed against him than any other member of the cabal, and often determined, by complaining of him to the king, to procure his disgrace; but mine was not a disposition to harbour revengeful ideas, and I quickly dismissed all thoughts of retaliation.

I was one day walking at Marly with the duchesse de Mirepoix, who had been reviewing the merits of all the court, praising some and criticising others. I was not paying very close attention, when the maréchale, having reached the name of M. de Cossé Brissac in her catalogue, broke out into a long panegyric upon his many virtues, &c.

"For heaven's sake," exclaimed I, "spare me the annoyance of hearing such praises of a man whom I detest."

"And why," asked she, "should you detest M. de Brissac?"

"Simply because he has conducted himself very shamefully towards me, and has circulated the most ill-natured and untrue reports."

The maréchale was silent for a few minutes, and then said,

"My dearest creature, you are still very ignorant of a life at court, and suppose that others possess the same

candour which so strikingly characterises yourself: painful as must be the lesson to one so frank as you are, I am still compelled to teach it, and to tell you, my too confiding friend, that you are deceived by every person about you."

"What, even by the maréchale de Mirepoix?" cried I, with quickness, (for I had always a great idea of personality as well as readiness of reply,) but the maréchale was too old a campaigner to be disconcerted at my abrupt attack.

"The maréchale de Mirepoix is no better than her neighbours," pursued she; "and when speaking to you of those who are opposed to her, I advise you to mistrust her as well as others."

"I will not fail to do so," replied I; "but am I to credit her when she extols M. de Brissac?"

"Yes," answered she, "you may believe her, and still more when she affirms, that instead of calumniating you, M. de Brissac has more than twenty times taken up your defence."

Two days after this conversation, as I was meditating alone, madame de Mirepoix entered; and, according to her usual custom, she seated herself beside me on a sofa, and drawing from her pocket a paper, said, holding it up,

"What would you give to know what is said of you in this letter?"

"Does this paper concern me?" asked I.

"It does entirely so," replied the maréchale, "although addressed to me, it relates solely to you. It is yours if you please, and I recommend you to read it. You will be better enabled to tell me afterwards whether I was wrong in defending the person you so heavily accused the other day."

The writing was wholly unknown to me, and yet, ere I had glanced at the signature, I felt assured it came from M. de Brissac. Unable to resist the eager curiosity which urged me to ascertain its contents, I opened it and read it immediately; it was from the

duc de Cossé Brissac, in reply to a letter received from the maréchale, and was as follows:

"MADAM,—I have never doubted your friendship, but this last proof of it fills me with gratitude.

"You ask me for an explanation of my sentiments with regard to madame du Barri, and I will state them with my usual candour. That lady appears to me so beautiful, that had she even injured me I could never have the courage to hate her; and, as she never has done aught to offend me, I cannot possibly entertain any feeling of animosity against her. I hear her much praised for the goodness of her heart, for the open and unartificial turn of her mind, and for the gentleness and placability of her disposition. These are indeed most excellent qualities, and, unfortunately, but too rare in the present day. You know all the calumnies and slanders afloat concerning her; I hear continually the most atrocious charges made against her, but I respect myself too much to repeat them, and to render myself an echo for such vile reports.

"If any expressions of a disrespectful tendency against the comtesse du Barri are attributed to me I utterly disavow them. Had I been capable of uttering such sentiments I might well throw myself with grief and shame at the feet of her I had so injured; but, thank heaven, I have no pardon to solicit, nor any fault for which to make reparation. Be satisfied of the truth of my assertion, and, if it be necessary, condescend, dear madam, to undertake my defence; I cannot put myself into fairer hands.

"Deign to believe me, &c."

"Well," said the maréchale, when I had finished this letter, "and what do you think of this apology?"

"I wish for nothing better," answered I, "than being fully satisfied of the veracity of its sentiments; and, if I give it full credit, I must henceforward suspect one of my best friends."

"I neither know, nor wish to know, the name of your friend," replied madame de Mirepoix; "but since

he has spoken ill to you of M. de Cossé, I unhesitatingly proclaim him a liar and a slanderer."

"You treat my friends somewhat roughly," said I; "but I forgive you on account of the warmth and zeal with which you defend your own."

"Yes," replied the maréchale, laughing, "that is the amiable side of my disposition. But the duc de Cossé assures you he is not guilty, and his word is better than another's oath; I trust therefore that you will not any longer treat him as an enemy."

"Certainly not," answered I; "neither shall I ever forget the agreeable service you have rendered me on this occasion. I can assure you, it is much more in consonance with my wish to be on good terms with M. de Brissac than to be compelled to dislike him."

I know not whether the maréchale fully comprehended all the meaning I myself attached to these words, but scarcely had they escaped my lips than I found myself greatly embarrassed. Had madame de Mirepoix been observing me at the time, the alteration in my features would have easily explained what was passing in my mind. After this conversation a month elapsed before the events I am going to relate took place.

The court was now at Fontainebleau, a residence I greatly preferred to Versailles, on account of the much greater liberty to be enjoyed there; and I frequently availed myself of the leisure I managed to secure to take long morning walks in the surrounding woods, accompanied only by my faithful Henriette.

It was a beautiful morning in the month of September, the air was mild, and almost partaking of summer heat, the sky was cloudless, and scarcely the faintest zephyr ruffled the forest leaves. The king had just departed for the chase, and the noisy tumult which preceded this departure had given place to a profound silence. Desiring Henriette to follow me, I took my road towards the forest. I was by no means of a sentimental nature, but my imagination seemed on

this occasion filled with an unusually romantic impulse, and as I walked I became lost in reveries of the most innocent yet pleasing description. Versailles, the court, and courtiers faded entirely from my view, and, in their place, I pictured to myself a lovely village, in which I, as a happy country maiden, guarded a flock of sheep, of course as a shepherdess; it was indispensable I should have a shepherd, and I was busily engrossed in drawing the picture of this ideal companion of my rural joys, when, having entered a narrow path almost overgrown with tangled underwood, I perceived a young man of a fine and noble countenance, dressed in a most elegant and becoming hunting garb. A nearer approach convinced me it was the duc de Brissac. He advanced towards me with a graceful bow, and congratulated himself upon the happiness of meeting with me; for my own part I remained overcome by contending emotions scarcely able to articulate one word in reply, and then, by way of covering my confusion, I began to utter some hasty remarks upon the beauty of the morning.

"Yes," replied the duke, "I do indeed think it a lovely morning, and how much has it improved within the last few minutes!"

"And why, may I inquire," said I, "is not your grace at the hunt?"

"The hunt," replied he, with an absent air, "where does it take place?"

"Indeed that is more than I can tell you," said I.

"And I care very little at the present moment," added the duke, "wherever it may be."

As he said this, the duke offered me his arm with that air of chivalric gallantry which so well became him; I accepted it, and in a little time M. de Cossé and myself were wandering in the recesses of the forest. What we talked of is more than I can tell you, but I imagine that from the share I took in the conversation, my companion could not have been very favourably impressed with the charms of my mind.

We walked on in this manner for nearly an hour, when we arrived at one of the most solitary parts of the forest, on the summit of a hill, formed of rough blocks of stone piled together. My companion then quitting my arm, said, smilingly, "Do you not think, madam, that you are very confiding to trust yourself in so solitary a place with your most dangerous enemy?"

I had now recovered my self-possession, and easily guessed the duke's meaning.

"Indeed," replied I, "I have long since ceased to regard your grace as an enemy; and, since madame de Mirepoix showed me your letter, denying the charge of enmity against me, I have thought of you only as a friend who had been himself calumniated."

"Yes," exclaimed he, energetically, "shamefully, vilely calumniated; I have been the victim of a hateful intrigue. M. de Choiseul is my friend it is true, but I have never approved of his conduct towards you; that of his family has been still more inexcusable, and I have never disguised my utter disgust at it. Since my first intimation of the well-founded prejudices you had formed respecting me I have been twenty times upon the point of soliciting the favour of a quarter of an hour's interview, that I might have the opportunity of disproving such odious falsehoods."

This conversation lasted for some time, and I remarked with pleasure how eagerly M. de Cossé sought to exculpate himself in my eyes. He effectually removed every lingering doubt of his sincerity from my mind, for the manner in which he expressed himself was at once so frank, so persuasive, and so calculated to impress his hearers with an opinion of his sincerity, that I could not listen without being charmed into belief. With all this, and a peculiar talent he possessed of making the veriest trifles appear graceful and interesting by his own easy style of delivering them, you may judge the rapid strides by which my new acquaintance advanced into my friendship and esteem. One thing only annoyed me, and that was the manner in which he

spoke of the duc d'Aiguillon. Perhaps this might originate in his having discovered in that nobleman the person who had blackened him in my estimation. Without once naming him he completely pulled him to pieces; I feigned not to understand whose picture he was drawing in such unfavourable terms; for I conceived it my only plan, in order to prevent the necessity for my declaring openly in favour of one of my friends, amongst the number of whom I, from this hour, ranked M. de Cossé.

Time passed too swiftly for both of us, when Henriette, who had followed us at a little distance, approached and reminded me, that my hour of dressing had arrived. We resumed the road to the château, the duke accompanying me to the very door of my apartment, where, bowing respectfully, he quitted me. I saw him depart with the sincerest regret, unable to comprehend why so attentive, so polite a man as the duc de Cossé Brissac should leave me without even a request to be permitted to call and pay his respects. Was it from indifference or forgetfulness he had neglected to do so? Alas! this was a question I could not answer to my own satisfaction, and I dreaded lest it might be attributable to the former of these causes. Fortunately the maréchale de Mirepoix presented herself ere long to dissipate my fears. I immediately related to her my rencontre in the forest.

"Oh, my dear," cried my lively friend, "I know all that; M. de Cossé hastened directly he quitted you to give me the account of his happiness."

"And is he so soon satisfied," inquired I, "that a rural walk is sufficient for him to style himself happy in obtaining it?"

"Yes," answered madame de Mirepoix, "when that walk is enlivened with the society of a charming woman; and poor de Cossé seems to believe, the one who graced his promenade unequalled both for loveliness of person and sweetness of disposition."

The following day, and indeed the whole of the week,

appeared to me interminable, and the weather proving unfavourable for walking, I was prevented from revisiting the forest, where, I doubted not, I should again encounter M. de Brissac. The Sunday following I was at my toilette, my room filled with my sisters-in-law, several strangers, and my female attendants, when a note was brought to me, in a hand-writing I recognised, at the first glance to be the same as that of the letter madame de Mirepoix had shown me from M. de Brissac. I durst not, in the fear of betraying my emotions whilst perusing this billet venture to open it in the presence of witnesses; and I would have given all the costly things around me for undisturbed leisure to enjoy its contents. However, with feigned carelessness, I threw the note upon a heap of letters and petitions which had been placed there ready for my inspection; as it fell it turned so as to display the seal, from which I found it impossible to divert my attention; it consisted of the arms of the Brissac family, a saw half buried in a rock, with the word *Perseverance* engraved around; the device appeared to me charming.

I can with truth affirm, that, for once in my life, I was perfectly indifferent to the duties of the toilette, and that I listened with apathetic indifference to the many compliments bestowed upon my appearance; these compliments appeared to me endless, and no sooner did I flatter myself with having got rid of my visitors than fresh parties were continually arriving, so that my toilette seemed lengthened beyond my patience to endure. At last the ceremony was concluded. These tedious visits were ended, and I was left to the solitude I so ardently coveted; with a trembling hand I seized the letter, and opening it so as to preserve the beautiful impression of the arms of Brissac, I read as follows:—

"MADAM,—I had flattered myself with the hopes of seeing you again ere this, and trusted that the same good fortune which had once so essentially befriended me would again lend its aid, but these deceitful hopes

have disappeared. Will you, madam, deign to show yourself a divinity more kindly disposed to me than the capricious deity whose smiles have been suddenly withdrawn upon the present occasion? Will you permit me to join the group of favoured mortals who throng around you to offer at your feet their vows and homage? Grant but my prayer; and, if I prove not the most deserving, at least you shall find me the most faithful and devoted of your adorers.

"I await your reply with much anxiety, and throw myself on that goodness which is now so well known and properly estimated. Oh, if it be necessary to win the prize to which I aspire, by entertaining a proper sense of its inestimable value, I venture to assert that I shall not be unworthy of laying claim to it.

"Condescend to believe the unfeigned sincerity

"With which I remain, &c."

"Come," said I, as I finished the letter, "this is speaking to the point; but, indeed, my high and mighty gentleman, you deserve to be well punished for your past indifference; it would be serving you very rightly to torment you a little, and to reply to your request by a laconic denial, even if I were afterwards to take pity upon your grief. But, no; I have a heart too tender, and a disposition too forgiving, to be able to find pleasure in plaguing people." So saying, I took up a pen, and hastily wrote the following reply:—

"Monsieur le duc,—It is impossible to refuse a prayer so touchingly asked; I give you free permission to rank among my adorers, and to offer your homage as frequently as your inclination leads you so to do. You see I take you at your word, and accept the title of divinity with which you have invested me, but I cannot permit you to compare me with the fickle goddess men call Fortune, who bestows her gifts without any regard to merit, whilst I, in listening to your petition, prove that I distribute mine with more circumspection.

"I remain, monsieur le duc, &c."

"P.S. You can obtain an introduction to my house through the maréchale de Mirepoix."

Scarcely had I despatched this reply, when I discovered an omission which greatly annoyed me; I had quite forgotten to charge the duke to be silent on the subject of my letter, when speaking to madame de Mirepoix. The exquisite tact of M. de Cossé, however, repaired my indiscretion. I saw the maréchale in the evening.

"Well," said she, "I have good news for you."

"What is it?" inquired I.

"Nothing less than the conversion of the duc de Brissac, whose heart you appear quite to have won the day you met him in the forest, and he has for ever renounced the opposite party to range himself under your banners; and this morning he came to beg I would present him to you—will you have any objection?"

"No," replied I; "it is impossible to refuse so important a deserter. Besides, the duke is your friend, and I know that it will afford you pleasure to see him under my roof."

"You are an excellent creature," cried madame de Mirepoix; "pray mention M. de Brissac to his majesty this very evening."

These last words rather disquieted me; I could not admit into my intimate society any person without previously obtaining the sanction of the king, and I felt some embarrassment at the idea of pronouncing the name of my new friend before his majesty. However, time pressed, and I was compelled to make the needful request. "You have my hearty consent," replied Louis XV.; "I know of no person about the court I should have greater pleasure in recommending to your esteem than the duc de Cossé, and I beg of you to receive him with kindness."

I promised his majesty a scrupulous obedience to his commands.

"Well, what says our royal master?" inquired the

maréchale de Mirepoix, approaching me with a look of anxiety.

"That your protégé may come; bring him to-morrow, and he shall receive a gracious reception."

This approaching presentation occupied me the whole night; my thoughts, sleeping or waking, presented no other idea, and the morning found me still engaged in meditating upon it. Thus did I, without reflection, indulge a growing passion for one who very possibly might not bestow a second regard upon me; and, without considering the consequences to which such sentiments might lead, give myself to all the delightful anticipations of continually seeing and hearing an object I should have avoided rather than sought.

CHAPTER III.

Jealousy of the duc d'Aiguillon—Madame du Barri writes to the duc de Cossé—His reply—He visits the countess—Mademoiselle de Parseval and the duc de Fronsac—The comtesse du Barri and the duc de la Vrillière—Scene with the duc de Fronsac—The duc de Richelieu.

The accession of the duc de Cossé to our party created much surprise as well as dissatisfaction among the opposite party. At the head of the discontents I ought to cite the duc d'Aiguillon. Upon the evening in which I first received M. de Cossé at my house, the duke inquired of me whether madame de Mirepoix were commissioned to procure recruits for our cause. I replied, that however that might be, we owed her many thanks for introducing so respectable and efficient a partisan.

"Have a care," answered the duc d'Aiguillon, "that

you have not admitted a wolf in sheep's clothing; you are fully aware of the calumnies with which M. de Cossé has hitherto blackened your fame."

"You are mistaken," cried I, with a candour which was entirely genuine; "M. de Cossé protests that he has never spoken disadvantageously of me; he has written the same thing to the maréchale; and, I must own, that his justification appears to me so complete, that I trust you will likewise vote for his admission into our party. And besides, are we not weakening our enemies by thus drawing away the bravest of their champions? What thinks your grace? is not the duc de Cossé Brissac a valuable addition to our side of the dispute?"

This species of explanation wholly disconcerted the duke, who, unwilling to evince a personal dislike to his rival, feigned to be satisfied for the present.

M. de Cossé was a great favourite with the king, and when we returned to Versailles, continued to show me the same attentions, spite of the ill-natured observations of the Choiseul party, who endeavoured to scandalize me by every possible means. I was inundated with anonymous letters, charging him with having propagated the most infamous reports concerning me; but all this was unavailing, nor was it possible to prejudice me against the man who was daily gaining the first place in my heart. Hitherto I had concealed these calumniating falsehoods from him; but, during the absence of M. de Cossé to Paris, I received another of these anonymous billets, which caused me so much uneasiness, that I could not prevent myself from forwarding it to the duke; I accompanied it with the following note:—

"Monsieur le duc,—The accompanying letter will show you the manner in which your enemies (who are mine also) treat you. You are accused of speaking ill of me, simply in revenge for your having done me justice; and by those persons, who, inimically disposed, are enraged to find you inclined to act kindly to-

wards me. I send you this infamous scrawl, that you may judge of the degree of credit I attach to it, and leave it to you to make what use of it you think proper. For my own part, no letter in which you are basely traduced shall find a place in my cabinet.

"Adieu, monsieur le duc; and be persuaded that the exalted opinion I entertain of you, is too firmly fixed upon the conviction of your many merits to be shaken or influenced by the futile endeavours of those who hate you for your generous adherence to my cause."

Monsieur de Cossé hastened to reply as follows:—

"MADAM,—If ever there was an angel of goodness 'tis yourself, and they must be fiends indeed who could hate or harm you. I will not attempt to vindicate myself from the atrocities set down to my charge; I feel that it would be an insult to my self-pride to do so, and besides, your kind letter convinces me that I need no justification in your opinion.

"If indeed I mentioned you at all to your enemies, it was to tell them how much I regretted not having known you sooner. How many noble qualities have I lost the opportunity of admiring, and how many virtues have I been prevented from appreciating! Your goodness of heart, your promptitude to serve and assist, are equally calculated to attract the love and esteem of all who have the honour to approach you.

"May you long enjoy their tenderness and regard, and may you long deign to bestow your friendship upon him, who, although lately honoured with the title of your friend, will yield to none of those who have been longest considered as such for zeal and devotion."

This letter enchanted me; I read it over and over again twenty times, and each fresh glance at those words which painted the tenderness of his feelings towards me, made my heart beat with delight at the existence of a sentiment in which I so fully shared. Two days afterwards, as I was still meditating upon this charming letter, the duke entered my apartment; he had just

returned to Paris, and his first visit was to me. I hastened to thank him for his attention.

"Nay," said he, "do not, I pray you, compliment me upon that which is but in consonance with my own dearest inclinations; still, much as I anticipated the happiness of seeing you, I must confess I come to afford you the happiness of exercising your ever ready benevolence."

"Your visit then," added I, quickly, "will be doubly welcome; but what is the affair to which you allude?"

"There is in Paris," returned the duke, "a family whom you alone can succour; they are in the deepest and most undeserved misfortune; will you refuse them your assistance?"

"Your recommendation in their favour is quite sufficient," answered I; "what can I do for the unfortunate beings for whom you are so much interested? Tell me, that I may lose no time in serving them."

"Here," said the duke, drawing from his pocket several sheets of folded paper, "here is a sort of petition, which will at once explain the case. Have the goodness to read it, it is not very long."

I subjoin the written statement as I received it from the duke:—

"Madam,—A wretched creature on her knees implores your pity; trusting, that when the particulars of her sad case are known to you, you will not refuse your benevolent aid.

"I belong to a poor but noble and virtuous family, residing in the neighbourhood of Montpelier; my name is Parseval. I was educated at St. Cyr, and about two months since, having completed my education, my parents quitted Languedoc, to remove me from the scene of my peaceful studies, and having some friends possessed of much power and credit in Paris, they determined upon visiting that capital ere we returned home. Madame d'Egmont, to whom my parents were well known, received us graciously, and invited me to pass some time with her. With my parents' approba-

tion I became that lady's guest, and under her roof had first the misfortune to encounter the duc de Fronsac. This nobleman left no arts untried to gain my favour, but, I know not why, I shrunk from his assiduities; and as he increased the tenderness of his manner towards me, my aversion to him became stronger and stronger, until his attentions became so annoying to me, that I became disgusted with Paris, and prayed of my parents to return to our humble but happy home. They promised me we should quit Paris directly they had obtained a commission they were daily expecting to procure for my brother Jules.

"Alas! why did they not hearken more promptly to my wishes! how many griefs should we then have avoided; I should not then have been condemned to pass my youth in unavailing grief, nor would you, madam, have been importuned by these lamentations; but I have been told that the prayers of the unfortunate never weary you, that you are kind, feeling, and generous. All this, and more, I have been told by the duc de Cossé, who has condescended to promise, that this, my sad suit, shall reach you through his medium.

"We remained therefore at Paris; and the duc de Fronsac, tired of restraining his guilty passion, presumed to outrage his sister's roof by making me the most infamous proposals; I instantly quitted the house, determined never more to enter it. In vain did the princesse d'Egmont send to request my return; my resolution was too firmly fixed to be shaken by all her entreaties; my father and mother blamed what they termed my caprice, and, to clear myself in their eyes, I related all that had occurred, to prevent my again visiting madame d'Egmont. The pride and indignation of my father were roused, and he would have flown instantly to demand satisfaction for the insult I had received, but for my tears and the prayers of my mother. Alas! our efforts only served to hasten the catastrophe.

"The duc de Fronsac, tired of vainly expecting to meet me again at the house of his sister, had the effron-

tery to present himself at that of my parents. My father, unable to restrain his anger, demanded an explanation; and the duke, far from admitting the charge, turned the whole blame upon me, whom he accused of coquetry and lightness of conduct, attributing to my excessive vanity the mistake of construing into a declaration of love that which was merely the expression of a friendly interest. Having pledged his honour for the truth of these calumnious falsehoods he departed; but, spite of his protestations of innocence he wrote to me, and having employed several disguises in order to gain access to me, sought to carry me off by force. At this fresh proof of his guilt, my father, unable to repress the just indignation with which such repeated insults inspired him, challenged the duke. This was the stepping-stone to our destruction; for, in two hours from the period of sending the challenge, my father was conveyed to the Bastille by a *lettre de cachet*. In those dismal walls my beloved parent still languishes, whilst, on the following day, an order arrived for confining my mother in the convent of the nuns of Saint Anthony.

"My brother was quartered near Paris, and I lost no time in writing to him the sad relation of all the woes which had befallen us; beseeching of him to request leave to fly to our succour. He came, listened to my mournful tale, and having promised me to act with prudence, communicated our misfortunes to the noble duc de Cossé. This godlike man, (for what earthly title can give him sufficient praise?) offered to place me under the charge and protection of his amiable and virtuous lady; but my brother, fearing to involve his noble patron by thus throwing our quarrel upon his shoulders, declined his generous offers with many thanks.

"That very evening our troubles re-commenced. The duc de Fronsac, believing me now stripped of my natural protectors, and not fearing to encounter the anger of a timid girl, dared to present himself before me. My brother, who was present when this destroyer

of our peace arrived, forgot all his prudent resolutions; and, listening only to the feelings of a son and brother, he reproached the duke boldly and fearlessly for his unprincipled conduct. The dispute was angrily maintained for some time, until, at last, both drew their swords, and rushed from my apartment to decide their quarrel in a more fitting place. My brother little knew the fate which awaited him; for, scarcely had he quitted the house, when three assassins, who never quit the duc de Fronsac, threw themselves upon my poor brother, who fell upon the ground, pierced and mangled with their murderous blows.

"Ah, madam, how shall I attempt to describe my wretchedness and grief, when they brought back to me the body of my brother weltering in his blood? If heaven has spared you the mournful experience of such misery, you can form no just estimate of mine. Happily, for even in the time of bitterest trials we can find room for congratulation, my brother was only wounded. I communicated this last blow to the duc de Cossé, from whom we received those kind and sympathizing attentions, which none but a mind like his would think of offering the distressed. This day my brother's wounds bear a more favourable appearance, and we have both been removed to the house of our august protectors: this mansion, inhabited by the purest and most exalted virtue, will be an asylum into which the duc de Fronsac will not dare intrude.

"But, madam, although my fears for my own safety and the life of my brother are for the present tranquillized, I have still to sorrow, to remember that both my beloved parents are sighing in captivity; and their liberation can only be obtained through the interference of some person more potent in credit and influence than the duc de Fronsac. The duc de Cossé has told me, that you are that powerful person, at whose bidding the bolts of my dearest parents' prison will open to restore them to my arms. Ah, madam, refuse not that interposition in my favour, which I invoke in the

name of heaven. Deign to restore to me those beloved authors of my being, who have too long wept over their separation from their unhappy child. Believe, dearest lady, that she who now addresses you will cherish your memory with the most eternal gratitude.

"Yours, madam, most humbly and respectfully,

"ADELAIDE DE PARSEVAL."

I should ill describe the various sensations which agitated me whilst reading this mournful story. When I had concluded, the duc de Cossé said,

"What think you of the delicate gallantry of the duc de Fronsac?"

"I abhor the wretch who could thus trample upon every tie," answered I; "I always disliked him before this happened, and I now execrate him. But I promise you he shall not long triumph in his wickedness."

"Have a care, madam," exclaimed the duke, "that you take no steps which may prove injurious to the duc de Richelieu; for, should this latter deem his honour concerned in upholding that of his son, you will have to struggle against a strong party."

"No matter," cried I, with warmth, "even though I should expose myself to even so unequal a warfare, I would not hesitate one instant to enter the lists in such a cause. Whatever may be the duc de Richelieu's ascendency over the mind of the king, be assured I have nothing to fear from it, and I am equally persuaded he will be the first to reproach his son with the baseness of his proceedings."

I then thanked M. de Cossé for the gratifying opportunity he presented me with of doing good, assured him of the lively interest I felt in his protégé, although I did not confess that I was as charmed with the warmth, yet innocence, of her praises of her noble protector, as with her own simple story, and begged that he would give her the following note written by myself:—

"MADEMOISELLE,—Sorrows such as yours would move every heart but that of the duc de Fronsac. Tranquillize yourself; I promise you to take up your

cause as zealously as though it were my own; and, if I cannot obtain vengeance for the wrongs done you, at least I will have justice. Before three days have elapsed your parents shall be at liberty; meanwhile, I entreat of you to thank the duc de Cossé in my name, for having procured me the opportunity of serving you.

"Rely upon the sincere interest with which your narrative has inspired me, and depend implicitly upon the promises of her who is truly

"Your friend,

"The Comtesse du Barri."

When I gave this note to M. de Cossé, "How good of you!" cried he; "yet, could I have expected less?"

"I merely imitate you, my good friend," replied I; "your active virtue rouses me to a spirit of emulation."

At these words a sudden flash of pleasure spread over the handsome features of the duke, but it soon faded away; he became thoughtful and melancholy, whilst his eyes were moistened with tears. I was not less agitated than himself; but, with a view of concealing my embarrassment, I exclaimed, "Come, monsieur le duc, let me urge you to go and console mademoiselle de Parseval, with the assurance that I will not rest till I have unravelled this hateful plot against her happiness, and I will bend my steps to the duc de la Vrillière, that excellent man, who injures his fellow-creatures by way of pastime."

M. de Cossé smiled, and kissed my hand with a tenderness which was not displeasing to me. He then left the room, and I immediately summoned my sister-in-law Chon, to accompany me in my visit to the duc de la Vrillière. On the road thither I related to my companion all that had occurred. Chon fully shared my indignation, declared that the duc de Fronsac was a villain, and advised my laying the whole affair before the king, should the duc de la Vrillière disregard my present application. "Fear not," answered I; "*le petit saint* will be sure to listen to me; the affair is too

atrocious for any person to extenuate; no one would wish to have their name mixed up with so infamous a tale."

Talking thus we reached the apartments occupied by M. de la Vrillière. We were ushered into the cabinet of *le petit saint*, where we found madame de Langeac and the duc de Fronsac already assembled. At the sight of me the duc de la Vrillière rose up from his arm-chair, with a sudden exclamation, partaking in its tone more of pain than pleasure. Madame de Langeac, who could not endure me, received me most graciously, whilst M. de Fronsac, who loved me about as well as the two worthy friends with whom he was holding private audience, when my unexpected arrival disturbed their conversation, began a long tissue of unmeaning compliments upon the beauty of my appearance, and his own unlooked-for happiness in having thus an opportunity of paying his respects, &c. Nevertheless, I easily read in the countenances of the inestimable trio a mixture of curiosity and fear, which added fresh force to the warlike dispositions with which I had entered the room.

Politeness required that madame de Langeac and the duc de Fronsac should rise, as though intending to depart. "Do not disturb yourselves, I beg," said I; "my business here is by no means of a private nature; pray do not leave the room." Then, addressing myself to *le petit saint*, "Could you inform me, M. le duc," said I, "for what reason two *lettres de cachet* have been issued against M. and madame de Parseval?"

At the mention of these names, the duc de Fronsac turned pale, and M. de la Vrillière seeing nothing very alarming in his having expedited two *lettres de cachet*, replied that he had forgotten the affair, but that he would inquire.

"Yes, sir," answered I, "you must inquire into these reasons, and that quickly. This family is allied to that of my husband," (I need not tell you that no such relationship existed,) "and immediately that I

learned their misfortune, I determined to lose not a moment in hastening to their assistance."

"But, madam, as ——"

"No delay, sir," cried I, vehemently; "I insist upon an immediate reply to my question; you understand me."

"Madam, I am entirely at your command."

So saying, the minister rang a bell, a clerk appeared, who was desired to bring a certain register.

Meanwhile M. de Fronsac sat biting his lips in evident perturbation, and I am quite sure he wished himself any where but in the place he was; nevertheless, with the view of concealing his embarrassment, he said to me,

"If, madam, the king has deemed M. and madame de Parseval worthy of punishment, we may reasonably presume his majesty did not adjudge them guilty without satisfactory proofs of their crime."

"Be assured, M. le duc," answered I, haughtily, "'tis my intention to speak to his majesty of the affair."

The register in question being now brought, *le petit saint* opened it, and read in a loud voice, "M. de Parseval, confined in the Bastille at the solicitation of the duc de Fronsac: madame de Parseval, confined in the convent of Saint Anthony, also at the solicitation of the said duc de Fronsac."

Turning round towards the duc de Fronsac, I exclaimed,

"You can spare me the trouble of questioning the king respecting the guilt of my relations, since I now learn that it is at your request they have been deprived of their liberty."

"Why, really, madam," replied the duc de Fronsac, assuming an air of careless indifference, "I believe their only crime was having a very charming daughter."

"To whom you would fain have paid your court in the absence of both father and mother, if I mistake not, M. le duc?"

"I'faith, madam, you have made a tolerably shrewd guess," returned the duke.

"Oh, you rogue!" cried madame de Langeac, with an affected smile.

"Eh, eh, eh!" screamed *le petit saint*; "upon my word, a very cunning trick."

"I doubt greatly," replied I, "how far the king may approve of such a joke; for my own part I shall not conceal from him the lively indignation with which it has inspired me."

"You are severe, madam," cried the duc de Fronsac, sneeringly.

"Yes, sir; and it as well becomes me to be so under these circumstances as it becomes a man of your rank to be brave, and not hire bravos to assassinate those with whom you yourself engage in combat."

As I thus spoke the duke darted a terrible look at me, but I bore it without casting down my eyes, and returned his gaze as fixedly as his was levelled at my countenance.

Madame de Langeac sought to excuse the hateful conduct of the duke.

"Madam," said I, in reply to her observations, "if I do not obtain ample justice here, I shall apply to the king; it is but right his majesty should be aware of the indifference with which his name is employed to screen their infamous actions."

"This would be very unkind in you, madame la comtesse," added the duc de la Vrillière; "you know my entire devotion to you; and whatever may be my friendship for the duc de Fronsac, I should most certainly have refused to oblige him in the affair, had I known the interest you took in this family."

"How, duke!" exclaimed de Fronsac, "do you already abandon me?"

"I would abandon the whole universe rather than displease my lovely countess here," replied *le petit saint*, in a honied tone.

"Deceitful man," cried I, "I see you wish to gain time, but I am equally determined to submit to no delay. Remember, that my lasting displeasure and heavy vengeance await you, if I quit this room without taking with me the two orders necessary for the release of my injured friends."

"What, expect them now? and before my face?" exclaimed the duc de Fronsac.

"Yes, sir," returned I, "now; this very instant, in your presence; and I further declare, that I will pursue you to your utter destruction, if you presume to devise any fresh mischief against either mademoiselle de Parseval or her brother; you comprehend me, my lord duke?" De Fronsac was anxious to escape, but I held him by the arm. "This is not all," said I; "I must request of you to lose no time in obtaining from the war-office a captain's commission for young de Parseval. Upon that condition alone, my lord duke, I will consign your conduct to oblivion."

"It shall be done, madam," said de Fronsac, as he bowed, and quitted the room.

When the door was closed after him, the marquise de Langeac said to me,

"Well, madam, you must surely be satisfied after so decisive a victory as this. You have just defeated, in the most gallant style, no less a person than a first gentleman in waiting."

"In a good cause," answered I, "there need be no fear; and I might, without injustice, have imposed much harder terms on the duc de Fronsac, by way of reparation for the mischief he has caused."

"I trust," said *le petit saint*, in a piteous tone, "that my fatal complaisance with the wishes of my friend has not drawn upon me the displeasure of the comtesse du Barri."

"Madame du Barri is too reasonable a creature for that, I will engage," resumed madame de Langeac; "she will never feel offended with you for having the

kind feeling towards the son of the maréchal de Richelieu, which should always subsist between persons of a certain rank in society."

"Kind feelings!" exclaimed I; "is it kindness to assist a profligate young man to persecute and oppress an innocent family? The next thing would have been to request the duc de la Vrillière would grant a *lettre de cachet* for the imprisonment of young de Parseval."

"Eh, eh, eh!" cried *le petit saint*, "those favours are seldom refused when our friends demand them."

"You are a bad and a wicked man," replied I, indignantly; "a very bad man, to treat with this indifference the liberty of his majesty's subjects. I pity the king, for all the mischief done in his name is visited upon him."

The duke, who perceived that I was really angry, hastened to soften my displeasure by expediting the *lettres de cachet*, which were to deliver M. and madame de Parseval from their present wretched confinement. He again deplored his misfortune in having so unintentionally offended me, and, with usual servility, gave me all the assistance and apologies I could possibly have desired. I replied, that I was satisfied; and, furnished with the important documents which were to restore peace and happiness to an unfortunate family, I quitted him less his friend than ever I had been, and certainly an object of greater hatred than ever to his former mistress.

No sooner had I returned to my apartments, than I sent to request the duc de Richelieu would come to me immediately. He obeyed in all haste, and I gave him the full account of what had occurred.

"This is indeed," said the old maréchal, "a sad version of my son's affairs of gallantry, and I heartily disapprove of the conduct of the duc de Fronsac in the affair. Nevertheless, I trust, madam, for the honour of my house, that you will have the goodness to prevent the circulation of this disgraceful story."

"Agreed," replied I; "but upon condition that

you assist your son in his endeavours to procure a company for M. Jules de Parseval."

The maréchal replied, that he could refuse me nothing; and I, on my side, promised to exact the deepest secrecy from the duc de Cossé, and to refrain from mentioning the affair to the king. And I kept my word; for so well did I manage things, that I obtained from the king a marriage-portion for mademoiselle de Parseval of 40,000 livres; and so soon as her brother was sufficiently restored to health, the happy family returned to Languedoc.

My friend, take my word for it, there is more real happiness in promoting the welfare of others than in a selfish devotion to ourselves alone.

CHAPTER IV.

Letter from madame du Barri to the duc de Cossé—His reply—The rendezvous—A dinner at the house of the maréchale de Mirepoix—A letter from the duc de Cossé to the countess—Her reply—Episcopal gallantry.

No sooner had the duc de Richelieu quitted me, than I sat down, and wrote the following letter to the duc de Cossé:—

Sir,—With the purest delight I send you information of our having fully succeeded in our undertaking. The *lettres de cachet* were revoked in my presence, and both M. de Richelieu and M. de Fronsac are actively engaged in soliciting a captain's commission for young de Parseval. This is my day's work; are you satisfied with it? If so, I claim, as the reward of my exertions, an absolute silence upon all that has transpired; in-

deed, I ventured to promise as much in your name to the duc de Richelieu. I have very little doubt but your modesty will induce you willingly to subscribe to the conditions I have taken upon myself to enter into, &c. &c."

The duke replied as follows:—

"Yes, madam, you are, must be happy: for a mind like yours will always find its greatest happiness in succouring the unfortunate. The silence you enjoin shall be strictly observed by me. Had you not desired me to conceal the facts, with how much pleasure should I have proclaimed to the world your generous sympathy with the distressed, and my own unfeigned admiration of your many amiable qualities. Never before have I known such an union of beauty and virtue. Pardon me for repeating an observation, which is for ever on my lips—'Why, oh why, did I not know you earlier?' How could I listen to those who, being incapable themselves of understanding the noble feelings of such a heart as yours, refuse to believe you possessed of a single virtue; or those, who, envious of your many charms, sought to deaden their effect by denying their existence.

"Ah, madam! may I venture to hope you will pardon this involuntary fault? May I presume to ask a condescension on your part most ardently desired by me? &c. &c."

What this favour was which the duke so earnestly desired I know not, but my heart suggested a solution of the query, by the happy assurance, that the growing passion I entertained for M. de Cossé had become mutual; that I was loved by the only man whose affections appeared to me worth possessing; and the bare idea was sufficient to make me happier than I had ever been in my whole life.

The next time that M. de Cossé saw me I was surrounded by the king and several of the courtiers. The duke approached, and said, in a low voice, "May I not hope for the opportunity of thanking you in private?"

The king's eye was at that instant so fixed on my countenance that I could not reply; but a few minutes afterwards I said, with apparent carelessness, "The day after to-morrow I shall spend the day at Paris; I have many purchases to make, and the morning will not be sufficient for the purpose."

Whilst I was saying this, I looked at the duc de Cossé, who perfectly comprehended my meaning; his fine eyes thanked me with a glance too eloquent to be misunderstood, and all the rest of the evening he continued the life and spirit of the party. The duc d'Aiguillon, who was also present, and who had, as I imagined, caught the look of mutual understanding which passed between M. de Cossé and myself, looked and spoke daggers; but his gloomy sullenness had no effect on me, who, intoxicated with the anticipated delight of the day at Paris, could think of nothing else.

On the day appointed I repaired to Paris, dispensing with the attendance of either of my sisters-in-law. I know not whether the duke had set any person to watch my arrival, he came about a quarter of an hour after myself, looking handsomer than ever. I could not conceal my emotion at the sight of him; he must have perceived it; but, far from presuming on the circumstance, it only seemed to render him timid and respectful. He began, by thanking me for what I had done for his protégés, bestowing on me praises which I lost no time in referring back to himself; for, besides the consciousness of his superior claims to commendation in the whole affair, I found it far more delightful to admire and extol him than even to hear him express so flattering an opinion of myself. When we had sufficiently discussed the affairs of the Parseval family, the conversation turned upon other matters, until, at last, love, not as applying to our own feelings, but considered as a general passion, became the theme of our discourse. Nevertheless, though we spoke not of ourselves, yet every instant we inadvertently made some allusion or other to our personal sentiments and

respective situations. In proportion as I appeared to greater advantage in the argument, the duke became more sad and dejected. I knew not to what to attribute this melancholy, which I exerted all my efforts, but in vain, to dissipate. I was much distressed at finding the duke so evidently struggling with some concealed emotion, and, whilst I endeavoured to learn the cause of his agitation, he suddenly seized my hand, which he covered with the tenderest kisses. I fully expected the *dénouement* was at hand, when, all at once, M. de Cossé rose, and stammering out a confused adieu, left me perplexed and uneasy, at having so fully revealed a passion which perhaps was not returned.

I had announced my intention of passing the day at Paris; I did not like to return to Versailles, but went from shop to shop merely to kill the time until I should feel inclined to repair to the house of the maréchale de Mirepoix, where I had engaged to dine.

After the first congratulations were over, she said, good-naturedly,

"What ails you, my dear creature? you seem out of sorts?"

"I am indisposed," replied I.

"Is your malady in the head or the heart?" inquired the maréchale.

"In my head," answered I, pettishly; and, touching my forehead, "I have a bad headache."

"Have a care, my dear countess," cried madame de Mirepoix; "the headache is sometimes a very dangerous complaint; tell me the truth like a good child. Have you not brought with you from Versailles some vexation or other?"

I was silent, not wishing for a *confidante*, and, above all, for such a one as madame de Mirepoix; I therefore feigned to be attentively examining an ivory box which lay upon a side-table, and, by way of saying something, I said to the maréchale,

"What a pretty purchase you have been making."

"Indeed," said she, smiling, "it is a present from the duc de Cossé."

At that name, which, of all others, I least expected to hear, a sudden cry escaped me, and I drew back with a species of terror. The maréchale, who was a perfect courtier, affected neither to see nor hear my evident agitation. She added, "I had invited the duke to dine with us, but he has just written to excuse himself from being here; his courier brought me his note. Do you know this courier?"

"No," replied I, delighted at having so insignificant a question addressed to me, "no, I do not know him; why do you ask?"

"Oh, because he is so very handsome," returned the maréchale; "he is twenty years of age, and you would scarcely believe him fifteen; his complexion is almost as delicately fair as your own; he has the finest eyes, a lovely mouth, a graceful figure, and such a well-turned leg! He wears a profusion of feathers, ribands, tassels, and as much gold lace as though he was preparing for a ball. What do you suppose I always think of whenever I see this handsome courier? Why, that nature, like society, has her distinctions—her princes, her counts, her marquisses; and sometimes a courier, in such a case, may be a king by his beauty: there is no equality anywhere."

"You are quite right," replied I to the maréchale, as seriously as though I had been listening to what she said.

Upon the whole, I could not but feel grateful to madame de Mirepoix for her constant efforts to rouse and amuse me; her penetrating eye had easily read my secret, but she kindly spared me. Such an act of consideration from one who had become so completely a creature of a court might well pass for friendship. Visitors were announced; and first arrived the chevalier de Chatellux, a man of some wit, which the philosophers good-naturedly magnified into extreme genius; then the abbé Arnaud, an academician and musician,

who, as you will shortly find, was not long in declaring war against Marmontel. After him came M. de la Harpe, who seemed to regard me with a jealous eye, as though he considered me as a rival in his glory: he endeavoured to show off before me like a peacock displaying its splendid plumes, expecting no less than that I should ask him to read his tragedy of the Barmecides; but I took care not to gratify his vanity, and he set me down as a woman wholly devoid of taste. Besides these, there was the comte d'Argental, who arrived with his pockets crammed with the letters of Voltaire; the marquis de Thibouville, another admirer of that great man; and Vernet, the painter, who could confine the sea, with its storms and calms, within a frame, four feet high and five broad.

Each guest endeavoured to make himself as agreeable as possible; and all who saw me so absent and preoccupied, set it down as the result of my thoughts being engrossed by some great political affair. Alas! how far was I with troubling myself with any such (to me) unimportant and valueless matters, and how heartily weary did I feel at the continual efforts made to amuse me; besides, literary men are not the most agreeable companions in the world; they could be such, most certainly, and no doubt would, if they were willing, when in female society, to lay aside their pretensions and literary dignity. But these marks of deference to the fair sex seldom occur; whilst, on the other hand, men of the world are more witty, they possess more conversational talent, they are devoid of pedantry and conceit, and, what is still better, their vanity does not for ever keep them on the alert, that they may be the first to astonish the company with the vast store of their erudite knowledge. I must ever maintain, that the society of men of the world must ever be more welcome and agreeable than that of literary men; but, lest I should be accused of injustice towards these latter, I will change the subject to

one far more interesting to myself, and speak to you only of the duc de Cossé.

I returned to sleep at Versailles. Shall I reveal to you, my friend, all the singular ideas which on this night crowded into my brain, when I reflected upon my morning's interview with the duc de Cossé; how we had sat beside each other and talked the hours away; of his sudden seizure of that hand which he afterwards so abruptly relinquished; sometimes fancying that I was not beloved, and the next moment almost angry with M. de Cossé for so openly displaying so great and vehement a passion? But, no, my friend, I cannot lay before you all the weak and foolish thoughts which successively followed these retrospections.

In the midst of my reveries morning dawned, and, weary of tossing upon a sleepless pillow, I rang for Henriette to commence the business of the toilette. She held in her hand a letter, which had been brought by the handsome courier of the duc de Cossé. I took this letter, and breaking the seal, which bore the impression of the arms of Brissac, I read as follows:—

MADAM,—Since my courage deserted me when I would have spoken to you, I have determined upon writing. What must you have thought of my senseless flight? You must, you do despise me for it; I who, for one glance of your bright eyes, would dare death itself. I love you truly and passionately, and yet I fled from you. Yes, I repeat it, I love you. You have acquired over me the most fatal ascendency, and my whole faculties, enslaved by your charms, seem able only to think or act as your will directs; but one cruel truth it is necessary I should ingenuously confide to you. Know, then, that dearly as I love you, another equally deserving with yourself shares my heart. She to whom I allude cannot boast the same peerless beauty with which you are endowed, but, like you, she is feeling, amiable, and she loves me. Duty, honour, my solemn vows, all bind me to her; at the foot of the

altar I have solemnly sworn to be hers only; and here I repeat my oath even to you, whose heart it may chill towards me, that I will be hers, and hers only, till death dissolves our bonds. How wretched am I! I who, one short week back, would have been thankful for the hope of not being utterly displeasing to you, now that you have deigned to encourage my tenderness, am despairing over the very conviction which should constitute my happiness; and strange, inconsistent, and ungrateful being that I am, I shrink with dread from the idea of your encouraging a reciprocal affection for me. Ah! I conjure you to hate me, despise me, do anything but love me.

"Still, when I pledged my faith to her whom I am bound to prefer to you, I knew not, I was ignorant of the existence of a female to whom I could more worthily give up my heart. Thus, then, I hold myself disengaged from a vow I feel it impossible any longer to keep.

"Shall I confess to you, that when I met *her* yesterday after having quitted you, she seemed to me almost plain? I could have fancied her usual beauty had forsaken her only to invest you with more dazzling charms; and, whilst I spoke to *her* I thought of *you* alone, and to your lovely image did my inmost thoughts cling with the tenderest enthusiasm.

"Ah! in mercy pardon my madness; yet, if you can or do share in my feelings, send but one line of comfort, by assuring me that such felicity is mine; but, should my unfortunate passion provoke your displeasure, spare me, I entreat of you, all blame, all reproach, and think not that any earthly arguments can have power sufficient to pluck it from my soul. Pardon me my involuntary crime of yesterday, or console me for what I am at present suffering."

I knew not what to think of this singular epistle: on the one hand, it was evident that the duc de Cossé loved me, and it was equally apparent that he still entertained a lively affection for his amiable wife. A

love so divided was far from satisfying me. I was still lost in a long train of doubts and hesitating purposes when Henriette entered the room, to inquire what answer she should return to the courier of the duc de Cossé.

"Let him wait," replied I, "and give him a louis."

"A louis!" exclaimed Henriette, surprised at my generosity.

"Yes; and if that be not sufficient give him two, but let him wait; and now leave me, I would be alone."

Henriette quitted me, and I determined upon writing the following note:—

"MONSIEUR LE DUC,—You are a most singular being, and your confessions are the most incomprehensible things I ever met with. I was far from expecting such a proof of your confidence, and you would have spared, had you but guessed the pain it has occasioned me. Why should you write to inform me that you love another? why make me the *confidante* of your amours? I freely admit, that she whom you prefer to me is well deserving of the high preference bestowed on her. Lavish on her then, I beseech you, your warmest affections, but do not ask me to share a heart exclusively hers. Believe me, I value your love too highly to consent to divide it with another: to be loved by you with less than an entire, an undivided love, would be worse than death, and I should shudder at the bare idea, that the vows breathed to me should be whispered to another likewise. Think well of what I have said, and resolve upon one side of the question or the other, no matter which; and however dearly your decision may cost me, I am willing to abide by it. She whom you love is, no doubt, sufficient for your happiness; and be assured, that whatever may be the sacrifice I make, my only regrets will be, that the pleasure of administering to your comforts has not been permitted to fall to my lot. Should any sorrow ever oppress you, come to me, and I will endeavour to console you for it; rely upon me

as the most faithful and attached of your friends; and be persuaded, that either in life or death, I shall ever be equally yours, sincerely and devoted,

"The Comtesse du Barri."

When I had concluded this foolish letter I hastily despatched it. Afterwards I threw myself on my bed, for I felt throughout my whole frame a most extreme languor and lassitude. I was still sleeping, when my dreams were broken by the arrival of the grand almoner, the pope's nuncio, and, at last, Louis XV. My notary was soon after announced, and I was compelled to rise before the two prelates, who, with a gallantry truly episcopal, knelt by the side of my bed, each presenting me with a slipper; and the king was highly pleased with the scene, and lost no time in repeating it to all he met, so that it was quickly circulated throughout the château. The bigots of the day were greatly scandalized, the philosophers infinitely amused, and the opposite party furious with rage and mortification.

It was considered a mere venial offence for the clergy to have one or more mistresses, but to have exhibited a show of gallantry towards the mistress of their king was an offence as heinous as unpardonable.

CHAPTER V.

The duc de Cossé and the comtesse du Barri—Second assignation—Another dinner at the maréchale de Mirepoix's—Comte Jean and the comtesse du Barri—The street of Fossés Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois—Jealousy—Meeting of the countess with the duc and duchesse de Cossé.

The duc de Cossé did not appear this day nor the next. I asked myself, with uneasiness, if he were en-

deavouring to cure himself of his love. At length, on the morning of the third day he arrived. He came at the hour at which I only received my most intimate friends. We were alone; I was greatly affected, and he not less so. He seated himself, and pressing his hands on his head, exclaimed,

"I am mad."

"No," I replied, "you are not mad but miserable."

"Yes," he said, sighing, "very miserable: my situation is horrible; no one can divine its wretchedness."

"Except your friends," I added.

"Friends! I have none."

"Ah, sir, you forget me."

"You, madam! you my friend!"

"Yes I am; do you doubt it?"

"Ah! if it were true! And yet the title *friend* is a very chilling one. How delighted would be my heart to give you another! but you know my devotion, the depth of my attachment! I love you, however; pity me, I entreat of you, since you are my friend, and support my weakness."

"Well," I replied, "how can I be supposed to exert the courage in which you are deficient? I, who am only a woman; can I be expected to evince more strength than you?"

At these words the duke left his chair, and throwing himself at my feet, said, "I adore you to distraction."

"Rise," I replied, "rise from this posture. Be calm, be yourself. Is it a misfortune to love me?"

"No, by heaven! but to fail in his oath is not becoming a man of honour, and I am betraying a person for you."

"Well, my lord duke, do not betray any one," I retorted, somewhat piqued, and withdrawing from him my hand, which he had seized; "I should be sorry if you were to betray any person for me."

"Ah," said he, "you hate me. You ought to perceive how I love you, since I even regret her I leave. Is it true (and his eyes were moist with tears) that you

do not detest me? that your heart beats favourably towards me?"

"Be silent on that point," said I, gently pushing him from me; "speak not of it. I can give you no hope until I am certain that you love me only."

"It will come to that," he replied, in a voice full of emotion. "The inclination is so disposed, and it is so agreeable to me to allow myself to be thus directed."

I was about to reply, when the duc d'Aiguillon was announced. Of all persons who could have entered at this moment he was the person I least desired to see. He entered, believing that I was alone, and the sight of M. de Cossé displeased him, as I found by his air, and the ill-humour with which he said,

"Perhaps I intrude here?"

"Had I been particularly engaged," I replied, "the door of my drawing-room would not have been left wide open."

"You have perhaps something of a particular nature to say to madam," said the duc de Cossé, with an air in which pride and flippancy mingled; "and if so, I will raise the siege. State affairs must give place to private matters."

M. d'Aiguillon, in his turn, made an embarrassed reply. I glanced at his rival, who made me a sign to be prudent. That I might break the solemnity of this interview, I desired my sister-in-law to be sent for. After her the marquis de Chauvelin entered with madame de Bearn, and the maréchale de Mirepoix with the prince de Soubise. A conversation ensued, in which M. de Cossé evinced much good temper and feeling. When all were gone but the maréchale, she said to me, speaking of him,

"He has the gaiety of happiness."

"Yes," I replied, blushing, "he is very amiable."

"But," she added, "he has not the head which can govern a state."

"Nor do I think he has the wish."

"So much the better," replied the maréchale; "but he

may be taught, and he may then profit by circumstances."

In truth, the maréchale was an exceedingly shrewd woman; and, although her heart had never been very sensitive, she guessed with much accuracy the feelings of others.

M. de Cossé wrote to me next day a letter, full of devotion, and swore he should henceforward love me without a rival. He begged me to return to Paris, that he might repair his fault. You may be assured that I did not refuse him this rendezvous, and that thenceforward he held the first place in my heart.

I went in the evening to-sup with the maréchale and the party you know so well. The happiness I had felt whilst with the duke followed me to this house; I was gay, witty, foolish; the learned appeared to me, for once, very amiable. I even talked to M. de la Harpe of his tragedy of the *Barmecides;* he offered to read it to me. "Willingly, sir," said I, "but to me only it must be; you understand me; for there is at the château a person who is exceedingly irritated against philosophers."

My proposition did not satisfy M. de la Harpe, who had hoped to read his work to Louis XV. himself; and, thanking me for my condescension, he so arranged matters, as not to accept my invitation. The angry pedant painted me as the enemy of fine poetry; M. de Marmontel joined chorus with him, and thus I was run down by the literary pack.

The duc de Cossé engrossed my mind, and I experienced for him that impetuous love which we so seldom find in this world. I was compelled to be perpetually on my guard, that I might not betray to the prying world about me what was passing in my mind. One day, however, my prudence forsook me: I was in my drawing-room, with one of my sisters-in-law, comte Jean, and the duke, when the latter, who was peeling an orange, cut himself. I shrieked at the sight of his blood, ran towards him trembling with emotion, and covered

the wound with my handkerchief. This was supreme folly. The duke saw my imprudence, and endeavoured to conceal it, by expatiating upon my exquisite sensibility, which was alarmed at the least ill to others. I also endeavoured to laugh at my own vivacity, but from that moment all in my household saw the regard I felt for de Cossé.

The day after this *scena* my creature of a brother-in-law came to me very early. He placed himself in an arm-chair, took a prodigious pinch of snuff, and thus commenced:

"Sister," he uttered, gravely, "in my quality as head of the family, I have come to talk with you on a very delicate matter. Listen attentively to me."

"Speak on."

"You know what trouble it has cost me to place you where you are. I have urged your interests and my own, be it said, *par parenthèse*, before my pleasures; and thanks to the name you bear, you have attained the most distinguished station in the realm."

Here comte Jean paused; and I, not guessing when he would terminate, said,

"Brother-in-law, do you want any money? This preamble augurs a request for a few hundred louis or so."

"Alas! yes," he replied, with a sigh, "I have need of money like the rest of the world; but this is not my immediate business; listen. How many lovers must you have to live comfortably?"

At this ridiculous question I fell from the high tone I had assumed, and said, mechanically,

"How many lovers must I have? Why, comte Jean, you must be crazy! I never heard such a question put to mortal woman!"

"But, sister-in-law, you know I am no selector of phrases. Answer me, how many lovers must you have to live comfortably?"

"This is really too absurd a question, and one that I will not answer."

"Well, then, I shall assume that you have answered it. In your situation prudence and precaution are necessary; you should avoid scandal and rumour. The king comes first, that is quite *en règle;* he has my brother's place, his rights, favours, and expenses, for he behaves towards you like a husband. He cannot have cause of complaint; as king, he must be acquainted with the usages of the fashionable world: this is one. The duc d'Aiguillon, two: him you chose yourself; he consequently believes himself master of your person, and he has a right in the eyes of France to complain if you divide your favours."

"What divide? What mean you, comte?"

"Yes," answered comte Jean, very coolly, "you have added the duc de Cossé to the list."

"Suppose I have, what consequence is that?"

"My dear sister, let me finish. It was with your connivance that M. d'Aiguillon entered the ministry; he imagines himself alone the possessor of your good graces, and yet one of your whims may deprive him of the portfolio, and give it to the next gentleman who may gain your favour. Sister, matters cannot continue thus: we cannot change a minister as we would a lover or a glove; and the king would not be pleased to see you thrust into the ministry, one after the other, all those whom you judge worthy of your consideration."

"But, brother-in-law, you speak to me in a very strange language."

"But, sister-in-law, your conduct is infinitely more strange than my language. If you exposed but yourself alone, well: be it so; but, unfortunately, there are a great many of us who will suffer from your folly. Myself, for instance; I wish that *Frerot* should remain my banker for the rest of my life. If you are put down, I can no longer play for high stakes, the chancellor will fall, the duc d'Aiguillon will be turned out, and all this will follow, because you have a giddy head and a tender heart."

"Your impertinence is abominable; I detest you."

"Very well: I have only one word to add. Amuse yourself as much as you please; but, *morbleu!* do not put weapons into the hands of the Choiseuls to destroy you with."

"Is it my fault," I replied, weeping, "if I love the duc de Cossé?"

"Your fault is in letting him know it. Do you never reflect, sister-in-law?"

"No, never to renounce a lover who pleases me."

"So much the worse; I gave you credit for more sense. In truth, I might have selected a better successor for madame de Pompadour. Come, be prudent."

"Well, I will endeavour to be so."

"And will you endeavour to forget this silly love?"

"That is impossible."

"You have said so more than once." And so saying, comte Jean withdrew.

I compelled myself to follow his counsel; that is, to conceal my affection for the duc de Cossé; and so well did I affect this, that, although they talked of the preference I evinced towards de Cossé, yet nothing particular was known of it. The duc d'Aiguillon was fully occupied all day with politics and the cabals of the château, and, I believe, knew nothing of the affair. Besides, my friend, it is impossible for a courtier to be perfectly virtuous: the need which he has of being well with the powers that be, makes him every instant sacrifice conscience to interest. To be an honourable man is difficult; to be a good man, impossible. I leave you to judge what relation these remarks have to what I am narrating.

I loved the duc de Cossé, and I was not easy; his absence made me miserable. The affairs which took him from me rendered me unhappy, inasmuch as jealousy was added to the ennui produced by his absence. I had made Henriette my *confidante;* she listened to me, pitied, persuaded, and at times scolded me. She obtained all necessary information as to the movements of the duc de Cossé.

One day she told me, that the duke, when he visited Paris, went every morning to an old house in the rue des Fossés-Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois, where he remained for more than an hour. On this information my brain began to work. I was desirous of knowing who was the rival who dared to participate with me in the heart of the duke; I was anxious to see, to hear, to overwhelm her with my reproaches. By my order an apartment was hired opposite to the house in which this horrid creature dwelt. I learnt that the duke was to pass two days in Paris; I set out after him, and reached my own hotel, whence, after having rested myself, I issued, accompanied only by Henriette, and so dressed that recognition was impossible. I did not walk, but ran; I was mad; it seemed as if I was about to enjoy a pleasure in confronting the treacherous duke, even when all my happiness was staked upon the evidence of his fidelity.

I reached the hired apartment. Heavens! how dirty and offensive was it! I had left such an abode to obtain the utmost splendour of Versailles, and I returned to such an one, led by that self-same love which had attracted me from it, and, according to probability, for ever. And why then did I return to it? Because, upon the information (perhaps false) given to me by my waiting-maid I suspected an honourable man of perfidy! But I am not deceived. I see arrive on the opposite side a man plainly dressed, with a round hat —it is the duc de Cossé. He is not alone! a female leans upon his arm; she is wrapped in a mantle. I cannot distinguish her face; but, by her air, figure, and appearance, I guess she is young; and by her gesture, step, and the grace displayed by her whole person, I also guess that she is a lady of rank. I follow them with my eyes; they approach and enter the opposite house. Ye gods! I withdrew from the window, and fell staggering against the wall.

Anger came and brought me strength; I dart towards the door; in vain does Henriette attempt to hold me; I

descend the staircase four steps at a time, cross the street, and enter the house; a man meets me in the entry, and inquires what I want.

"I wish," said I, to speak to monsieur and the lady who have just gone up stairs."

"Well, then, go up to the second floor; the last apartment on the left hand."

I ascend; I enter. Heavens! what a picture! I see an old man ill lying on a bed; in the corner of the room an old woman; near the bed the duc de Cossé seated beside a young female, whose face is noble and lovely—it is madame de Cossé. What had I done! and what would I not have given had I not been so rash!

Oh, my friend, paint to yourself, if it be possible, my astonishment and my shame at the sight of the duchesse de Cossé! I guessed instantly what was the fact. This couple, whom I thought to surprise as two guilty creatures, were occupied in an act of benevolence. The old man was the husband of the duke's nurse; they had procured this lodging for him, and every day M. de Cossé, alone or accompanied by his exemplary wife, paid him a visit. As soon as I found my error, overwhelmed with confusion, I fell into a chair near the door half fainting. The looks of the duchess, who could no longer doubt her own misery, looks fixed on me like the statue of Medusa, almost petrified me. I heard a confused noise in my ears; I could not speak, but make signs, whilst I literally gasped for breath.

I know not how long I remained in this state. At length my swollen heart began to find relief, and I breathed more freely. I felt large tears trickling down my cheeks, and raising my clasped hands to the duchess, "Madam, madam," I cried, "pardon me!" M. de Cossé made me a sign to be silent, and said to his lady that I must be indeed troubled, to think that she had any thing to reproach me with. She proved, by a deep sigh, that it was not possible to deceive her. However, she approached me, and asked me, in a gentle tone, if

my carriage was at hand. "I came on foot," was my reply, in that tone which a culprit assumes who is undergoing interrogation, "but I am not alone, my waiting-maid is here."

At this instant Henriette entered, and madame de Cossé, inspired with a feeling of the utmost virtue, which would not allow her to lower her husband for an instant, even in the eyes of the old invalid, said to him,

"Duke, the lady seems too weak to be able to walk without assistance; I beg of you to accompany her; I will await you here."

"Ah, madam," I exclaimed, "you overwhelm me."

She again urged her husband to go with me, and I durst not say any thing, so much had her generosity obtained the ascendency over me, and I quitted her with a look expressive of admiration.

When in the street, I leaned on one arm of M. de Cossé, and one of Henriette. We did not utter one syllable until reaching my hotel, when, turning to the duke, I exclaimed,

"What imprudence have I been guilty of!"

"And cruel has been the punishment," he replied. "Ah, madam, could you suspect the sincerity of my love? But be at ease; I will see you in the evening."

"No, no," I said, "do not come; this *liaison* will make your admirable wife wretched, and must be broken."

"Broken?" replied the duke, "never, never!" and he left me.

CHAPTER VI.

Letter from the comtesse du Barri to the duc de Cossé—A party—The window—The value of a bishop's life—The duc de Cossé replies to the letter of madame du Barri—Interview between the duchesse de Cossé and madame du Barri.

This adventure had wrought me up to the finest point of romantic enthusiasm; besides, I loved too truly not to feel myself equal to any act of heroic devotion.

When I had regained my hotel, and previous to my setting out for Versailles, that I might not be outdone in greatness of soul by the magnanimity of the duchesse de Cossé, I wrote the following letter to the duke:—

"Monsieur le duc,—All is ended between us; nor can I longer aspire to the happiness of sharing with you a reciprocal love. My foolish jealousy has destroyed the delightful visions which surrounded me; and, whilst I recognised your worth, I have lost you by my over-anxiety to preserve you wholly mine.

"By how many cruel and reproachful thoughts has my imprudence of this morning been punished. Ah! my friend, how wretched am I! how miserable shall I ever remain! Reproach me not, but rather pity me; I loved you so truly! and the idea of living but for you was so precious to my heart. But let me conjure you not to avail yourself of this undisguised confession of my devotion to endeavour to combat my resolution. I cannot, I ought not, to show myself inferior to your noble and excellent wife; and I shall equal her in grandeur of soul if I can nerve myself to complete the sacrifice she so well deserves. I would fain possess her esteem, nay, I seem to value it as highly as I do your love; and, God knows, I would die to purchase a right to it.

"Blame me not, I beseech you; but be generous as is madame de Cossé, and like her have pity on me. Force me not to appear culpable in her eyes, in yours, and in my own. Believe me, that could matters but have remained upon the same footing they were yesterday, I should have been as happy as I am now, and must ever be, miserable. Yes, my friend, I repeat that I love you devotedly; that I shall long prefer you to the whole world; and, to the utter ruin of my own peace of mind, I fear I shall end my passion but with my life. Still I know the path which rigid honour points out, and I submit. To be truly worthy of you I must renounce you, and it shall be done.

"Yet, while I pray of you to take back the tenderness you have hitherto professed for me, I still cling to the memory of those dear but short-lived moments passed together. Never can I part with recollections so ineffaceably imprinted in my heart. Still shall I find my happiness in promoting yours, in anticipating your wishes, and proving to you of what a woman's love is capable. Your felicity will be my constant prayer; but can I persuade myself that you can enjoy it separated from me?

"Adieu, my friend; my beloved friend, adieu. What pangs does this cold, this cruel world cost to a heart so fond, so faithful as mine.

"Farewell, farewell."

This letter written and despatched, I hastened to fly Paris, and to shut myself up in my apartment at Versailles. My sisters-in-law were thunderstruck at the change in my appearance; I complained of illness, and at their request retired to bed. Doctor Bordeu, who was called in, finding I had more lowness than feverish symptoms, sought to amuse me by a thousand witty sallies. The king hastened to see me directly he learned my situation, and displayed the utmost care and solicitude respecting my health. Ah, had this kind and excellent-hearted prince but known all the feelings which were then struggling within my breast! M. de

Richelieu next arrived; after him came M. d'Ayen, the comtesse de Forcalquier, the maréchale de Mirepoix, the bishop de Senlis, the marquis de Chauvelin, and the duc d'Aiguillon; the sight of this latter seemed only to augment my malady.

The general topic of conversation was a tale of gallantry with which the whole château was filled. It appeared that at an early hour in the morning a detachment of Swiss guards had arrested a man, whom they found descending from a window by means of a rope ladder. This individual had allowed himself to be seized, and conducted to prison, without choosing to explain who and what he was. M. de Noailles, governor of the castle, informed of what was passing, and suspecting some mystery in the affair, went, contrary to his usual custom, to interrogate the prisoner personally. At the first glance he recognised in the person arrested the eldèst son of the duc de la Tremouille, whose explanation of his visit to the château went far to impeach the reputation of a lady in the establishment of the comtesse de Provence. The young man, in making such a disclosure as was necessary to liberate him from his unpleasant situation, had exacted a promise from the comte de Noailles of inviolable secrecy. This nobleman had merely mentioned the story to a few friends, who just told it to their friends, and so on till it reached the king's ear, who ended his relation of it by censuring the indiscretion of the old governor.

Meanwhile I continued a prey to my own bitter regrets, amidst the talk and conjecture with which I was surrounded as to who the heroine of this adventure might be. Just then Henriette approached me, holding a paper, which, under pretence of adjusting my pillow, she managed to slip under the covering of the bed. As she hastily held the letter to my view I saw that it came from the duc de Cossé; but how was I to read it? The king, who was seized with occasional fits of curiosity, had only to ask me for it; and what would have become of me, had I thus furnished him with a

written proof of my culpability? I was therefore constrained to put off the reading of this letter to a more convenient opportunity.

Louis XV. insisted upon supping in my chamber, nor could I find any pretext for refusing him. The conversation still went on at the expense of the ladies of the comtesse de Provence; young and old were alike mercilessly pulled to pieces; all shared the same fate. When all had given an opinion as to the really guilty fair one in the scandalous anecdote just related, the king said,

"Were it not for my prudence restraining me, what stories could I not tell you; but I am withheld from so doing, lest I might thereby impeach the honour of even the meanest of my subjects, but there are some intrigues of which we may speak without compromising any person, and the one I am about to relate is of that description. One of our acquaintances, a gentleman of excellent family, came the other day to request an audience of me. Chamilly having introduced him by a private door,

"'Sire,' said he to me as he entered, 'what is the price of a bishop's life?'

"The question appeared to me a singular one.

"'You had better,' replied I, 'inquire of my chancellor, who may possibly find what you wish to know in some law of Burgundy; but what is your reason for making the inquiry?'

"'The most urgent necessity,' answered he; 'for with your majesty's permission, I should be glad to kill one of your bishops.'

"'You have surely lost your senses,' cried I, astonished at such a piece of confidence. 'Who is the object of your dislike? and what has he done to you?'

"The individual then named the person whose death he desired; and I confess, that the mention of his name removed all my former surprise, for he is one of the most profligate men of the day."

"Truly, sire," said the duc d'Ayen, interrupting

Louis XV., " your majesty puzzles me greatly in my conjectures. There are in France so many bishops not famed for sanctity of life, that I know not on whom to cast my suspicions. Let me reckon a little: there are messieurs d'Orleans, de Toulouse, de Digne, de Narbonne, de Reims, d'Autin, de ——"

" Silence slanderer," replied the king, " or I will have you excommunicated at the next meeting of bishops."

Every one laughed at this sally, and the king continued.

" When the person who came to consult me had named the bishop in question, he said,

" ' I took a mistress from the opera, he seduces her from me; I next select an actress from the *Comédie Française*, he supplants me there; I bring to my estate the prettiest villager ever seen; well, he managed to take his tithes out of her. At length, wearied of all this, I determined to marry; but, sire, he has taken me for a fool, an idiot.'

" ' I understand you,' replied I, ' but really I think there must be some mistake. Your wife is virtue personified.'

" ' Sire,' resumed he, ' I caught them together, and that too on the very first Sunday in Lent.'

" After this account, my singular visitor (who certainly must have half lost his senses) inquired of me again, what the life of a prelate was worth; I once more referred him to the chancellor. Meanwhile I sent to desire the presence of this enterprising bishop, to whom I gave orders for immediately quitting Paris. My commands were executed, and the unfortunate husband, finding his tormentor no longer an inhabitant of the capital, by degrees lost his anxiety to estimate the exact value of the life of a bishop, in order that he might be at liberty to kill his enemy with a clear conscience."

This anecdote, which was most amusingly told by Louis XV., entertained the whole party, and for a

while served to distract me from my mournful reveries. When his majesty had retired, I dismissed the rest of the company; and no sooner was I alone than I eagerly broke the seal of my letter, which still bore the impress of the arms of the de Brissacs.

"No, madam, I will not grant you what you have the courage to demand of me. What, cease to love you? Ah, cease then to show yourself so worthy of my love. I shall cherish your dear image during my life, and in death my last thoughts will be yours. To-morrow I shall throw myself at your feet; and should you forbid me your door, I will not answer for the consequences. Remember, that the overwhelming passion which consumes me, renders me desperate enough even for crime. Adieu, my beloved; I love you spite of fate. Adieu, but only until to-morrow.

"Farewell, farewell."

This letter was ill calculated to restore me to reason, and throughout the night my only occupation was to read it over and over again. Sometimes I turned my thoughts towards madame de Cossé, whom I strove to banish as quickly as possible from my memory, feeling very certain that my conscience would never allow me to indulge my love for thè husband, whilst the image of the noble and confiding wife rose between him and me. At length I succeeded in banishing her from my thoughts as well as the letter I had last written to the duke. I remembered only the eternal tenderness promised me, and my own conviction of perfect happiness in the possession of such a love. Certainly a sincere and reciprocal love has treasures of peace and joy beyond calculation.

I arose on the following day with restored health and spirits, and received the many who crowded to solicit favours of me, in the most amiable and obliging manner. As I was conducting out of the room a noble lady of Bretagne, who had been soliciting some vacant post in my establishment, I saw in one corner of the saloon a female sitting down; it was the duchesse de Cossé. At

the sight of her my knees trembled, and I sunk into a chair; we were quite alone. She rose, and approaching me, said,

"Will you favour me with a short audience? I must speak with you."

"You may command me, madam," answered I, trembling; "you have every right to do so."

"Well, then," replied she, with a manner as little assured as my own, "forbid all interruption during our conversation."

I rang, and gave orders that no person should be permitted to enter the apartment in which we were. How greatly did the presence of madame de Cossé disquiet me! I, who possessed the royal favour, and who generally boasted so much self-possession, who was a woman of the world, became all at once metamorphosed by the violence of my passion into a weak, timid creature, a mere school girl. The duchess was not, evidently, more at her ease; nevertheless, she was the first to break the embarrassing silence which ensued.

"You are doubtless surprised, madam," said she, "to see me here after the meeting of yesterday; but I was anxious to see you, to reassure you, and to restore to you the repose of which you have deprived me—you love my husband?"

"I, madam?"

"Yes, you; nor can you deny it. I love him likewise; I look upon him as the best and most excellent of men; and, until yesterday, I entertained not a doubt that his heart was all my own. You have cruelly undeceived me, but I come not to reproach you; the evil is done. Speak to me only with candour, and answer my question, whether you really love my husband?"

"But too well," answered I, blushing.

"I am sorry for it, for all our three sakes," answered the duchess; "but no matter; 'twas not to excite your commiseration for myself I came hither. I feared lest you might imagine that I should spread abroad the scene of yesterday, and I wished to tranquillize you on

that head; be assured that not one word on the subject will escape my lips."

So much generosity startled and humiliated me. I would have spoken to the duchess of my sorrow and repentance, of the letter which I had written to her husband, but she did not give me the opportunity; for as she finished speaking, she curtsied, and left me.

Scarcely had she quitted the castle than her husband entered my apartment. I related to him the visit of the duchess, and the kindness with which she had conducted herself. He seemed touched by my recital, and I availed myself of that favourable opportunity to urge him to renounce his love for me, and to return to his amiable partner, in vain; my prayers and entreaties were alike fruitless. The duke appealed to my own heart, and soon made me resume my natural feelings. I had indeed spoken truly, when I assured him in my letter that I should always love him.

You have now before you, my friend, the most important occurrence of my life in its fullest particulars. What else remains to be told concerning it will be found in its proper place in the continuation of these pages. You know how well and nobly M. de Cossé has ever conducted himself towards me. He was not less constant and faithful in my reverse of fortune than was the duc d'Aiguillon. This latter is no more, but M. de Cossé still lives; and I trust that both of us will grow old together. Grow old! What a word; how full of gloomy and painful ideas! Still to grow old is to live; and life is dear to all of us.

CHAPTER VII.

The prince de Conti—His letter to the comtesse du Barri—The journey of Diderot to Russia—*Note du chargé de France à Saint Petersburg*—Mademoiselle Raucourt and Louis XV.—Beaumarchais—*Procès de Gaezmann*—Marin the gazetteer.

Now that I have sufficiently spoken of the duc de Cossé, it is time I should return to those events I have so long neglected. The princes had returned to the royal authority—the prince de Condé, gained over by madame de Monaco, whom he loved, and by money, which he was for ever in need of; and the duc d'Orleans, to oblige madame de Montesson. There remained but one who continued refractory except the prince de Conti. This nobleman still held out, nor could we persuade him to follow the example of the two princes I have alluded to.

The prince de Conti, although gifted with considerable talent, was ill calculated to play an eminent part; the time which was not engrossed by his pleasures he employed in studying medals, and his love for antiquities almost equalled his admiration of the fair sex. He revived in the isle d'Adam, and in the saloons of the Temple, the frightful orgies of the regency, adding to them scenes too horrible for repetition. This antiquarian Sybarite, who had been extolled by the cabal as the most perfect hero of his time, had rendered himself the general favourite by the politeness and affability of his manners; and his obstinate stand against the king's wishes was magnified into magnanimous courage and heroic firmness.

He was far from being rich, and yet he kept up habits of profuse expenditure. It is related of him,

that his treasurer came one day to inform him that his horses were entirely without food, (the person who supplied their provender having refused to do so any longer unless his many claims were discharged,) the prince calmly inquired, whether all his other creditors were equally refractory?

"Yes, my lord," replied the treasurer, "all, with the exception of your poulterer, refuse to supply you further."

"Then," replied his highness, "feed my horses with chickens."

The king returned the fixed opposition evinced towards him by the prince de Conti with the most determined hatred; he looked upon him as the enemy of the throne, was uneasy and restless at the most trifling action on the prince's part, and caused him to be constantly watched by the mysterious police of the comte de Broglie, and the official police of M. de Sartines. Nevertheless, the prince de Conti, seeing himself the idol of the people, cared but little for all these precautions, and took especial delight in observing, on every occasion, a line of conduct diametrically opposite to that pursued at the castle. His palace was the focus where the parliamentarians collected to concert fresh schemes, and project new conspiracies; and we have always believed that the pamphlets which appeared in such numbers against us, and which had for their aim the keeping up a continual ferment and irritation in the public mind, were fabricated and printed in the Temple, under the immediate inspection of his highness himself. The chancellor, who was by no means too delicately handled by this secret committee, was occasionally worked up to fits of the most violent fury with the prince de Conti; and it was several times in serious consideration to banish him the kingdom. I can with truth affirm, that but for my individual opposition, this measure would have been carried into effect. I fancied there was something great and elevated in this resistance to the wishes of a king; and a woman, as you

know, is easily caught by any thing which appears strikingly grand and marvellous.

The prince was well aware of the part I took in the affair, and he sent to thank me for my kindness towards him: the person charged with this commission was an Italian, named Falloni, a man of talent, who had the care and arrangement of his highness's cabinet. This Falloni, who was a dealer in curiosities, frequently called upon comte Jean and myself. I took an opportunity to request he would say from me to his serene highness, that I trusted he would not confound me with his enemies; that if ever I meddled with politics it was always with great reluctance, and never with the intention of injuring any person. Upon which the prince wrote me a note I have ever carefully preserved, as a very curious and important document; it was as follows:—

"MADAME LA COMTESSE,—Monsieur Falloni has apprized me of your friendly disposition towards me. I beg most gratefully to thank you for your goodness, and only regret that, under existing circumstances, I cannot personally express my gratitude. I had always coupled in my own mind a beauty so rare, so perfect as yours, with a heart equally noble and excellent; and your generous conduct towards myself leaves me only the satisfaction of finding I have rightly estimated you. Be assured, that if, whilst waging war with my enemies, any flying parties should annoy you, it will be a matter of serious regret to me; and happy should I esteem myself if, in consequence of an honourable peace, I might come to lay down my arms at your feet.

"Deign, I beseech you, to accept, &c."

I showed this letter to Louis XV., who read it over two separate times, then returning it with an air of impatience, he said,

"I had hoped to have found some overtures for a reconciliation, but I perceive only the expression of a commonplace gallantry."

"That is enough for me," answered I, laughing.

"Yes," replied the king, "that is the case with all

you ladies; you care very little for the affairs of the state, and at the first fine compliment paid you, you shout victory! For my own part, these continued oppositions displease me greatly; and I shall never be at rest till all the princes of my family have returned to their duty. I am willing to believe that there is no prospect of a civil war, but these petty and daily disputes are highly prejudicial to royal authority; they weaken it by disgracing it."

Louis XV. held all contradiction in the greatest horror: a few examples will prove the truth of what I advance. The king, in consequence of what he had heard from the duc de Choiseul, had taken a profound hatred to the Jesuits; he determined to exile them, when the king of Prussia, (who eagerly embraced every opportunity of tormenting Louis XV.,) learning the circumstance, hastened to declare himself the protector of the Jesuits, to whom he offered an asylum in Silesia. This piece of malice made Louis XV. almost frantic. Upon another occasion, the conversation happened to fall upon the correspondence of Frederic II. with M. de Voltaire. The prince de Poix took upon him to express his astonishment as to what they possibly could have to write about. "What should you suppose?" replied Louis XV., with impatience; "why, to scandalize me, and misinterpret my actions."

At the period of which I am speaking, Diderot, an obscure writer, and great pretender to philosophy, received from Catherine of Russia so pressing an invitation to visit St. Petersburg, that he resolved upon going thither. This piece of intelligence was soon spread throughout the château; and at a supper-party, which took place in my apartments, the king having asked the guests what were the last news, the marquis de Chauvelin replied, that the subject of most general interest was the approaching departure of Diderot for Russia.

"And what is he going there for?" cried the king. "I should not have imagined him sufficiently rich to undertake such a journey."

"He does not undertake it at his own cost," replied the prince de Soubise; "her imperial majesty pays all travelling expenses."

"What does her imperial majesty want with him at all?" asked Louis XV. with an air of dissatisfaction.

"To enjoy the charms of his conversation," was the answer.

"You did not inform me of this," observed the king, abruptly turning towards the duc d'Aiguillon.

"Sire," replied the minister, "I saw nothing of a state affair in the transaction."

"I crave your pardon," replied Louis XV.; "Diderot is the ambassador of the philosophical cabal, who have determined upon sending him to hold me up in derision and mockery in a strange land. He has never set foot in the castle, yet he will take upon himself to repeat a thousand falsehoods respecting my private life; and, in proportion as his calumnies are favourably received will he go on fabricating fresh slanders. Of a truth, the lot of a king need not be envied."

"If your majesty really apprehends any mischief from the impertinent gossip of Diderot," exclaimed the duc de Duras, "it would perhaps be as well to forbid his leaving the kingdom."

"Yes," added *le petit saint*, "a *lettre de cachet;* that will be the thing to stop his prating. I will cause it to be prepared the moment I leave this table."

"Have a care," cried the king; "you will involve me in a never-ending quarrel with her imperial majesty. She wishes for Diderot, and I have no right to oppose his departure: there would be a fine confusion if I did. Every honour and praise would be ascribed to the Semiramis of the north, whilst poor I would be exposed to the pitiless storm of pamphlets, satires, lampoons, epigrams, &c. These foreign potentates are not particularly nice in their line of conduct towards me. Have I ever seduced away their men of genius? Why should they deprive me of those who ornament my reign? It has always been a mania among my neighbours to

take from France our most skilful modists and celebrated men of letters; they are welcome enough to the first, but for the latter——" Louis XV. stopped for a few minutes, then resumed, "One thing is certain,—that so long as I live this Diderot shall never be admitted into the academy; I will have no more atheists and philosophers; there are plenty already."

The day following this conversation Louis XV. caused a letter to be written to M. Durand, our *chargé d'affaires* at Petersburg, desiring him to keep a watchful eye over the words and actions of the encyclopedist. I venture to predict that you will find some amusement in the perusal of the following letter, which M. Durand, in conformity with the king's desire, despatched to the minister for foreign affairs. His majesty lent it me, that I might show it to the maréchale de Mirepoix, and it afterwards remained in my possession.

"My lord,—M. Diderot has arrived here preceded by a high reputation. Fame has indeed exaggerated in a tenfold degree the opinion entertained of him in France. The inhabitants of this metropolis had expected a genuine philosopher, a veritable sage of the antique school; but, to their great mortification and disappointment, they find a man, whose only qualifications are strong imagination with something resembling wit. Her imperial majesty, who considers the grace and elegance of a well-bred Frenchman as the greatest advantage a person can possess, and appreciates those endowments almost beyond the cardinal virtues, has been greatly shocked at the vulgarity of the manners of M. Diderot, as well as his entire want of tact.

"At his first introduction to her majesty, his coarseness and effrontery excited universal surprise and dislike. He declaimed, in a loud and angry tone, against favouritism; and then, as a first essay, demanded of the empress the abolition of slavery. Her majesty found it necessary to repress this excessive zeal, and coolly replied to his harangue, by observing, that before attempting to prescribe rules for managing a kingdom, it

would be advisable to acquire some knowledge of its real state, its laws, and governments; and that it was scarcely possible to attain such information, by hastily passing through a few towns inside a travelling carriage.

" M. Diderot flattered himself that he was summoned hither to direct the sovereign in her mode of administering justice, and with that expectation he brought with him a plan for a new constitution, and the most extraordinary code of laws ever perused. As I have heard, however, there appears little chance that the world will be edified by their production.

" M. Diderot is frequently invited to suppers, where he is drawn on to speak of the fine arts and literature. This is his present occupation, until his anxious desire to come forth in the new character of legislator be gratified. However, he is tolerably silent respecting the affairs of our court, and he observes a greater degree of discretion on this head than I had expected from him. It is true, that, upon his first arrival, I apprized him, that unless he conducted himself with prudence and circumspection, he would not find it very easy to return to Paris. He has taken me at my word, and I have nothing to complain of. This journey must be looked upon as a complete philosophical essay.

" I am informed, by indubitable authority, that the acquaintance of M. Diderot has for ever disgusted the czarina with philosophy and philosophers, and that she has hastily dismissed the encyclopedist with a handsome present. Should anything fresh occur you shall hear immediately."

I have now occupied you sufficiently with the affairs of others; I will now speak of a time in which my fears of being supplanted in the king's affections, were excited by a female whom I had loaded with benefits.

Spite of the habitual gallantry of Louis XV., he troubled himself very little with actresses; whether he thought (and with reason) that these persons are charming only when adorned with the tinsel and glitter

of scenic decorations, or whether he imagined, that by selecting the objects of his regard from the boards of a theatre he might excite the dissatisfaction of the Parisian belles, I know not; but mademoiselle Rancourt, whom I had liberally furnished both with money and clothes, was imprudent enough to betray, in my presence, her own ambitious views on the heart of the king. I did not at the time pay any attention to the circumstance, but having heard shortly after that she was continually boasting of her intimacy with Louis XV., the dread of finding a rival in one I had hitherto believed too inconsiderable for notice, filled me with alarm. I immediately sought an explanation with the king, who laughed at my fears, asserting that he had no taste for such a pair of long scraggy arms as those of mademoiselle Rancourt. "Besides," added he, "I have no desire to turn my private apartments into a sort of theatrical saloon. This girl is public property; far be it from me to entrench upon so just a claim." And the better to mark his dislike towards mademoiselle Rancourt, Louis XV. from that moment interested himself greatly for mademoiselle Sainval, who, although very plain, had far more talent than mademoiselle Rancourt.

His majesty was much amused at the importance attached by the ducs de Richelieu and d'Aumont to the management of the theatres; and frequently, by way of a little badinage, he would affect to bestow his patronage upon some player who happened to be out of their favour. But the most indefatigable patron of theatres was the bishop d'Orleans, M. de Jarente, who even whilst holding the administration of church benefices, was for ever occupied with the concerns of the male performers, and in providing for the comfort and well-being of the female part of the *corps dramatique.* One day that the duc d'Aumont was obtaining the royal signature to some paper relative to the *Comédie Italienne,* his majesty observed,

"Duc d'Aumont, this must be a point of some nicety between you and your conscience; for, remem-

ber, you are infringing upon the territories of M. d'Orleans."

"Ah, sire," replied the duke, "I would give him a handsome sum to exchange his post for mine."

"I am perfectly sure he will agree to the bargain," returned Louis XV., "if the actresses are comprised in it."

Speaking of theatrical subjects leads me to mention a man who is now undisputed master of the boards. Caron de Beaumarchais acquired this year, by a trifling lawsuit, a surprising reputation. *M. de* Beaumarchais (for the gentleman resents any familiar attempt to address him as Caron de Beaumarchais) is a man who cannot exist without bustle and confusion; to condemn him to a life of repose would be a far more cruel sentence than to sentence him to death. 'Tis not glory he is ambitious of, but noise: so that he could but succeed in making himself the object of general conversation he cared very little whether good or ill were spoken of him. For this individual the hundred trumpets with which Fame is invested, were too few to blazon his name abroad. He possessed sense; and, what is very seldom found in company with wit, great skill in the management and application of it. He was clever in all schemes of commercial speculation, and studied diplomacy with a view to promote the success of his commercial enterprises, and he turned his literary reputation to the profit of pecuniary undertakings. What shall I say further of him? He was particularly clever and eloquent in his descriptions, strong and forcible in argument, but a jester and a liar. Woe to his adversary; he would cast him into the mud even at the risk of himself sharing in the fall.

I have been led on to sketch this hasty portrait of Beaumarchais, by the recollection of a lawsuit he had this year with madame Gaezmann. I shall not repeat to you an affair which is doubtless fresh in your memory, but just mention a few particulars I think it probable you never heard. When first the memoirs of Beaumar-

chais were published, my brother-in-law brought them to me. Comte Jean, as you know, could not endure the new magistracy, and was never so well pleased as when any slight or disrespect was cast upon any of the members. I have never been fond of reading; it fatigues me, and gives me the headache. I therefore took the book with much *nonchalance*, but scarcely had I read a few pages of it, than my attention was arrested by the fine and delicate wit, the penetrating and eloquent reasoning, the arch yet temperate raillery; until, at length, the writer completely subdued my dislike for the perusal of a long work; and, ere I had finished it, I had espoused his party.

I mentioned this book to the king as one which had afforded me the greatest amusement. As Beaumarchais had been one of the establishment of the château, Louis XV. was easily persuaded to read the work of one who was professor of the harp to the princesses. When he had perused it, he spoke to me in no very gentle terms of the man who presumed to attack his parliament.

"Mercy upon me, sire!" cried I; "you know very well it is the Maupeou parliament, not yours; besides, what have you to do with this quarrel? Why should you take up arms against M. de Beaumarchais, for the sake of an infamous woman, who is encouraged by a no less infamous husband."

"Madam," replied Louis XV., "although you have the most beautiful eyes in the world, you do not see any clearer than other people. Remember, that whatever may be its faults, the present parliament is mine; and it is ill serving me to endeavour to expose the different members of this parliament to public ridicule. The populace, who detest them, would be overjoyed to see them flung into a horse-pond."

The chancellor waited upon the king, to pray that the utmost severity might be exercised towards Beaumarchais, and that the present litigation might be ended by an extra-judicial measure. "Have a care how you follow up such intentions," answered Louis XV.; "were

you to do so, your name would be posted all over Paris, and the general report would be, that the whole parliament had shared the 'fifteen louis,' and that you, particularly, had come in for your portion. No, let justice have its course, and let a solemn decree declare who is innocent and who is guilty."

I coincided with his majesty in this opinion, and the chancellor had nothing more to say.

After this grand affair of tragi-comedy came the farce. The gazetteer Marin, who was paid for keeping a watchful eye over men of letters, came to me in a great rage, to demand vengeance on Beaumarchais, who, in his memoirs, had treated him with great severity. Comte Jean, who was with me, took up the matter, exclaiming,

"Who the devil advised you, Marin, to thrust your nose where you are not wanted? Your business is to espy the proceedings of men of letters, and not to take upon yourself to quarrel and fight with every clever man who has a slap at you. Beaumarchais, you say, has handled you roughly; so much the worse for you. Neither my sister-in-law nor myself have any desire to figure in the Gaezmann suit. You are well paid; be wise and hold your tongue."

"But, my lord, my honour——"

"Oh, for mercy's sake, my good friend, never make yourself uneasy about so mere a trifle."

Saying which, my brother-in-law gently took *le Marin* by the shoulders, and, in a friendly manner, put him out of the room.

CHAPTER VIII.

Madame du Barri purchases the services of Marin the gazetteer—Louis XV. and madame de Rumas—M. de Rumas and the comtesse du Barri—An intrigue—Dénouement—A present upon the occasion—The duc de Richelieu in disgrace—100,000 livres.

This Marin, a provençal by birth, in his childhood one of the choristers, and afterwards organist of the village church, was, at the period of which I am speaking, one of the most useful men possible. Nominated by M. de St. Florentin to the post of censor royal, this friend to the philosophers was remarkable for the peculiar talent with which he would alternately applaud and condemn the writings of these gentlemen. Affixing his sanction to two lines in a tragedy by Dorat, had cost him twenty-four hours' meditation within the walls of the Bastille; and for permitting the representation of some opera (the name of which I forget) he had been deprived of a pension of 2000 francs; but, wedded to the delights of his snug post, Marin always contrived, after every storm, to find his way back to its safe harbour. He had registered a vow never to resign the office of censor, but to keep it in despite of danger and difficulty. I soon discovered that he passed from the patronage of Lebel to that of Chamilly, and I was not slow in conjecturing that he joined to his avocations of censor and gazetteer that of purveyor to his majesty's *petits amours*.

Spite of my indefatigable endeavours to render Louis XV. happy and satisfied with the pleasures of his own home, he would take occasional wandering

fits, and go upon the ramble, sometimes in pursuit of a high-born dame, at others eager to obtain a poor and simple grisette; and so long that the object of his fancy were but new to him, it mattered little what were her claims to youth, beauty, or rank in life. The maréchale de Mirepoix frequently said to me, "Do you know, my dear creature, that your royal admirer is but a very fickle swain, who is playing the gay gallant when he ought to be quietly seated at his own fireside. Have a care, he is growing old, and his intellect becomes more feeble each day; and what he would never have granted some few years back, may be easily wrung from him now. Chamilly aspires at governing his master, and Marin seconds him in his project."

At length, roused to a sense of impending evil, by the constant reminding of the maréchale, I summoned Marin to my presence. "Now, sir," said I, as he approached, "I would have you to know that I am apprized of all your tricks; you and your friend Chamilly are engaged in a very clever scheme to improve your own fortunes at the expense of the king your master."

Marin burst into loud protestations of his innocence, declaring that he was as innocent as the lamb just born. I refused to believe this, and desired he would explain to me why he went so frequently to the apartments of M. Chamilly.

"Alas, madam!" replied Marin, "I go thither but to solicit his aid in craving the bounty of his majesty."

"You are for ever pleading poverty, miserly being," cried I; "you are far richer than I am; but since you want money I will supply you with it, and in return you shall be my secret newsman, and royal censor in my service. Now, understand me clearly; every month that you faithfully bring me an account of certain goings on, I will count into your hand five and twenty louis d'ors."

I must confess that Marin only accepted my proposition with much reluctance, but still he did accept it, and

withdrew, meditating, no doubt, how he should be enabled to satisfy both Chamilly and myself.

A long time elapsed before Marin brought me any news of importance, and I began to feel considerable doubts of his fidelity, when he came to communicate a very important piece of intelligence. He had just learned that Chamilly frequently went to Paris, the bearer of letters from the king to a young and pretty female, named madame de Rumas, who resided in the old rue du Temple.

Here was a pretty discovery; the king actually engaged in a love affair, letters passing between him and his mistress, whilst the head valet de chambre was acting the part of Mercury to the lovers. This indeed required some speedy remedy, and I lost no time in summoning my privy counsellor, comte Jean, whom I acquainted with what had occurred, and begged his advice as to the best measures to be pursued. "Indeed," replied my brother-in-law, "what others would do in our place would be to throw M. Chamilly from one of the windows of the château, and treat this his friend Marin with a lodging in the Bastille; but, as we are persons of temper and moderation, we will go more gently to work. I will, in the first place, gain every information relative to the affair, that I may satisfy myself Marin is not seeking to show his honest claims to your gold, by imposing a forged tale upon your credulity: when that is ascertained we will decide upon our next best step."

Comte Jean departed to seek the assistance of M. de Sartines, who was at that time entirely devoted to my interests; and, after having diligently searched the whole rue du Temple, he succeeded in discovering madame de Rumas. He learnt that this lady had recently married a person of her own rank, to whom she professed to be violently attached; that they lived together with great tranquillity, and had the reputation of conducting themselves as persons of extreme propriety and regularity; paid their debts, and avoided,

by their air of neatness, order, and modest reserve, the scandal of even their most ill-natured neighbours. The husband was said to be a great religionist, which increased the suspicions of comte Jean. With regard to the epistolary correspondence carried on by the lady, no information could be gleaned in that quarter.

Marin was again sent for by my brother-in-law, who questioned and cross-questioned with so much address, that Marin found it impossible to conceal any longer the remaining part of the affair, of which he had before communicated but so much as his policy deemed advisable. He confessed that he had originally mentioned madame de Rumas (whom he himself had long known) to Chamilly, had shown him several of her letters; and, as he expected, the style of these epistles so pleased the head valet, that he expressed a wish to see the fair writer. Marin accordingly introduced him to the rue du Temple, where he was most graciously received, and returned home enchanted with the lady: he spoke of her to the king, strongly recommending his majesty to judge for himself. Accordingly his majesty wrote to madame de Rumas, who received the letter from the hands of her friend Chamilly with all pomp and state, talked first of her own virtue and honour, and afterwards of her dutiful respect for his majesty. She replied to the royal note in so prudent yet obliging a manner, that the king was enchanted. This effective billet was answered by a second letter from the king, which obtained a reply even more tenderly charming than the one which preceded it. An interview was next solicited and granted; for a visit was such a trifle to refuse. The royal guest became pressing and the lady more reserved, till the time was lost in attempts at convincing each other. At the next interview madame de Rumas freely confessed her sincere attachment for his majesty, but added, that such was her desire to possess his whole and undivided regard, that she could never give herself up to the hope of keeping him exclusively hers whilst I interposed between her

and the king's heart—in a few words then she demanded my dismissal. This was going too far; and Louis XV., who thought it no scandal to have a hundred mistresses, was alarmed at the thoughts of occasioning the bustle and confusion attendant upon disgracing his acknowledged favourite and recognised mistress; he therefore assured her, her request was beyond his power to grant.

Madame de Rumas now sought to compromise the affair, by talking of a share in his favour. She asked, she said, but the heart of her beloved monarch, and would freely leave me in possession of all power and influence. The king, whose heart was regularly promised once a day, did not hesitate to assure her of his fidelity, and his wily enslaver flattered herself, that with time and clever management, she should succeed in inducing him to break off those ties which he now refused to break.

Things were in this state when Marin divulged to us the intrigue conducted by Chamilly, and directed, though in a covert manner, by the maréchal duc de Richelieu. This spiteful old man possessed no share of the talent of his family; and, not contented with the favour bestowed on his nephew, thought only of his personal credit and influence, which he fancied he should best secure by introducing a new mistress to the king. This well-concocted scheme threw both comte Jean and myself into a perfect fury. We dismissed Marin with a present of fifty louis, and my brother-in-law besought of me to grant him four and twenty hours undisturbed reflection, whilst, on my side, I assured him I should not rest until we had completely discomfited our enemies.

On the following day comte Jean laid before me several projects, which were far from pleasing in my eyes; too much time was required in their execution. I knew the king too well to be blind to the danger of allowing this mere whim of the moment to take root in his mind. One idea caught my fancy, and without

mentioning it to comte Jean, I determined upon carrying it into execution.

The maréchale de Mirepoix happened at this moment not to be at Paris at her hotel de la rue Bergère, but at her country house, situated au port à l'Anglaise. I signified to the king my intention of passing a couple of days with the maréchale, and accordingly set out for that purpose. Upon my arrival at Paris I merely changed horses, and proceeded onwards with all possible despatch to rejoin the maréchale, who was quite taken by surprise at my unexpected arrival. After many mutual embraces and exchange of civilities, I explained to her the whole affair which had brought me from Versailles. The good-natured maréchale could not believe her ears. She soon, however, comprehended the nature of my alarms; and so far from seeking to dissipate them, urged me to lose no time in crushing an affair, which grew more threatening from each day's delay. I was fully of her opinion, and only asked her assistance and cooperation in my plan of writing to M. de Rumas, and inviting him to come on the following day to the house of madame de Mirepoix.

That lady would doubtless have preferred my asking her to assist me in any other way, but still she could not refuse to serve me in the manner described; for I either bestowed on her all she desired, or caused others to gratify her slightest request; and how could she be sure, that were my reign to end, she might derive the same advantages from any new favourite? Self-interest therefore bound her to my service, and accordingly she wrote to M. de Rumas a very pressing letter, requesting to see him on the following day upon matters of the highest importance. This letter sent off, I dined with the maréchale, and then returned to sleep at Paris.

On the following day, at an early hour, I repaired to the port à l'Anglaise; M. de Rumas arrived there a few minutes after myself. He had the air and look of an honest man, but perhaps no species of deceit is more easily detected than that quiet, subdued manner, com-

pressed lips, and uplifted eye. Now-a-days such a mode of dissembling would be too flimsy to impose even on children; and hypocrites are ever greater proficients in their art than was even M. de Rumas.

Madame de Mirepoix left us alone together, in order that I might converse more freely with him. I knew not how to begin, but made many attempts to convey, in an indirect manner, the reasons for his being summoned to that day's conference. However, hints and insinuations were alike thrown away upon one who had determined neither to use eyes nor ears but as interest pointed out the reasonableness of so doing; and accordingly, unable longer to repress my impatience, I exclaimed abruptly,

"Pray, sir, do you know who I am?"

"Yes, madam," replied he, with a profound bow, and look of the deepest humility, "you are the comtesse du Barri."

"Well, sir," added I, "and you are equally well aware, no doubt, of the relation in which I stand to the king?"

"But, madam,——"

"Nay, sir, answer without hesitation; I wish you to be candid, otherwise my exceeding frankness may displease you."

"I know, madam," replied the hypocrite, "that his majesty finds great pleasure in your charming society."

"And yet, sir," answered I, "his majesty experiences equal delight in the company of your wife. How answer you that, M. de Rumas?"

"My wife, madam!"

"Yes, sir, in the company of madame de Rumas; he pays her many private visits, secretly corresponds with her——"

"The confidence of his majesty must ever honour his subjects."

"But," replied I, quickly, "may dishonour a husband."

"How, madam! what is it you would insinuate?"

"That your wife would fain supplant me, and that she is now the mistress of the king, although compelled to be such in secret."

"Impossible," exclaimed M. de Rumas, "and some enemy to my wife has thus aspersed her to you."

"And do you treat it as mere calumny?" said I. "No, sir, nothing can be more true; and if you would wish further confirmation, behold the letter which madame de Rumas wrote to the king only the day before yesterday; take it and read it."

"Heaven preserve me, madam," exclaimed the time-serving wretch, "from presuming to cast my eyes over what is meant only for his majesty's gracious perusal; it would be an act of treason I am not capable of committing."

"Then, sir," returned I, "I may reasonably conclude that it is with your sanction and concurrence your wife intrigues with the king?"

"Ah, madam," answered the wily de Rumas, in a soft and expostulating tone, "trouble not, I pray you, the repose of my family. I know too well the virtue of madame de Rumas, her delicacy, and the severity of her principles; I know too well likewise the sentiments in which her excellent parents educated her, and I defy the blackest malice to injure her in my estimation."

"Wonderfully, sir!" cried I; "so you determine to believe your wife's virtue incorruptible, all the while you are profiting by her intrigues. However, I am too certain of what I assert to look on with the culpable indifference you are pleased to assume, whilst your *virtuous* wife is seeking to supplant me at the château; you shall hear of me before long. Adieu, sir."

So saying, I quitted the room in search of the maréchale, to whom I related what had passed.

"And now, what think you of so base a hypocrite?" asked I, when I had finished my account.

"He well deserves having the mask torn from his face," replied she; "but give yourself no further con-

cern; return home, and depend upon it, that, one way or other, I will force him into the path of honour."

I accordingly ordered my carriage and returned to Versailles, where, on the same evening, I received the following letter from the maréchale:—

"My dear countess,—My efforts have been attended with no better success than yours. Well may the proverb say, 'there is none so deaf as he who will not hear,' and M. de Rumas perseveres in treating all I advanced respecting his wife as calumnious falsehoods. According to his version of the tale, madame de Rumas has no other motive in seeing Louis XV. so frequently, but to implore his aid in favour of the poor in her neighbourhood. I really lost all patience when I heard him attempting to veil his infamous conduct under the mask of charity; I therefore proceeded at once to menaces, telling him that you had so many advantages over his wife, that you scorned to consider her your rival; but that, nevertheless, you did not choose that any upstart pretender should dare ask to share his majesty's heart. To all this he made no reply; and as the sight of him only increased my indignation, I at length desired him to quit me. I trust you will pardon me for having spoken in as queenlike a manner as you could have done yourself.

"Adieu, my sweet friend."

This letter was far from satisfying me, and I determined upon striking a decisive blow. I sent for Chamilly, and, treating him with all the contempt he deserved, I told him, that if the king did not immediately give up this woman he might prepare for his own immediate dismissal. At first Chamilly sought to appease my anger by eager protestations of innocence, but when he found I already knew the whole affair, and was firmly fixed in my determination, he became alarmed, threw himself at my knees, and promised to do all I would have him. We then agreed to tell Louis XV. some tale of madame de Rumas that should effectually deter him from thinking further of her.

In pursuance with this resolution, Chamilly informed the king, that he had just been informed that madame de Rumas had a lover, who boasted of being able to turn his majesty which way he pleased, through the intervention of his mistress. Louis XV. wrote off instantly to M. de Sartines, to have a watchful eye over the proceedings of the Rumas family. The lieutenant of police, who had some regard for me, and a still greater portion of fear, was faithful to my interests, and rendered to Louis XV. the most horrible particulars of the profligate mode of life pursued by madame de Rumas; assuring him, that from every consideration of personal safety, his majesty should shun the acquaintance. The king, incensed at the trick put upon him by these seemingly virtuous people, was at first for confining both husband and wife in prison, but this measure I opposed with all my power; for, satisfied with the victory I had gained, I cared for no further hurt to my adversaries. I contrived to insinuate to the worthy pair the propriety of their avoiding the impending storm by a timely retreat into the country, a hint they were wise enough to follow up, so that I was entirely freed from all further dread of their machinations.

All those who had served me in this affair I liberally rewarded; Marin received for his share 500 louis. It is true he lost the confidence of Chamilly, but he gained mine instead, so that it will easily be believed he was no sufferer by the exchange. I caused the maréchale to receive from the king a superb Turkey carpet, to which I added a complete service of Sèvres porcelain, with a beautiful breakfast set, on which were landscapes most delicately and skilfully drawn in blue and gold: I gave her also two large blue porcelain cots, as finely executed as those you have so frequently admired in my small saloon. These trifles cost me no less a sum than 2800 livres. I did not forget my good friend M. de Sartines, who received a cane, headed with gold, around which was a small band of diamonds.

As for Chamilly, I granted him his pardon; and I think you will admit that was being sufficiently generous.

After having thus recompensed the zeal of my friends, I had leisure to think of taking vengeance upon the duc de Richelieu for the part he had acted. He came of his own accord to throw himself into the very heat of my anger. He had been calling on the maréchale de Mirepoix, where he had seen with envious eyes the magnificent carpet I had presented her with; the cupidity of the duke induced him, after continually recurring to the subject, to say, that where my friends were concerned, no one could accuse me of want of liberality. "No, sir," answered I, "I consider that no price can sufficiently repay the kind and faithful services of a true friend, nor can baseness and treachery be too generally exposed and punished." From the tone in which I spoke the old maréchal easily perceived to what I was alluding. He was wise enough to be silent, whilst I followed up this first burst of my indignation, by adding,

"For instance, monsieur le duc, how can I sufficiently repay your friendly zeal to supply the king with a new mistress?"

"I, madam?"

"Yes, sir, you; I am aware of all your kind offices, and only lament my inability to reward them in a suitable manner."

"In that case I shall not attempt to deny my share in the business."

"You have then sufficient honour to avow your enmity towards me?"

"By no means enmity, madam. I merely admit my desire to contribute to the amusement of the king, and surely, when I see all around anxious to promote the gratification of their sovereign, I need not be withheld from following so loyal an example. The duc de Duras was willing to present his own relation for his majesty's acceptance, the abbé Terray offers his own

daughter, comte Jean his sister-in-law, whilst I simply threw a humble and modest female in his majesty's path. I cannot see in what my fault exceeds that of the gentlemen I have just mentioned."

"You really are the most audacious of men," replied I, laughing; "I shall be obliged to solicit a *lettre de cachet* to hold you a prisoner in Guienne. Upon my word, your nephew and myself have a valuable and trustworthy friend in you."

"Hark ye, madam," rejoined the maréchal. "I know not, in the first place, whether his majesty would very easily grant you this *lettre de cachet*, which most certainly I do not deserve. You have served my nephew and neglected me; I wished to try the strength of my poor wings, and I find, like many others, that I must not hope to soar to any height."

While we were thus talking the maréchale de Mirepoix was announced. I was still much agitated, and she immediately turned towards the duke, as if to inquire of him the cause of my distress: upon which, M. de Richelieu related all that had passed with a cool exactitude that enraged me still further. When he had finished, I said,

"Well, madame la maréchale, and what is your opinion of all this?"

"Upon my word, my dear countess," answered madame de Mirepoix, "you have ample cause for complaint, but still this poor duke is not so culpable as you imagine him to be. He has large expenses to provide for; and to obtain the money requisite for them he is compelled to look to his majesty, whose favour he desires to win by administering to his pleasures."

"Alas!" replied the duke, "can you believe that but for the pressure of unavoidable circumstances I would have separated myself from my nephew and my fair friend there?"

"Come, come," cried the maréchale, "I must restore peace and harmony between you. As for you, my lord duke, be a true and loyal subject; and you,

my sweet countess, use your best endeavours to prevail on the king to befriend and assist his faithful servant."

I allowed myself to be managed like a child; and, instead of scratching the face of M. de Richelieu, I obtained for him a grant of 100,000 livres, which the court banker duly counted out to him.

CHAPTER IX.

A prefatory remark—Madame Brillant—The maréchale de Luxembourg's cat—Despair of the maréchale—The ambassador, Beaumarchais, and the duc de Chaulnes—The comte d'Aranda—Louis XV. and his relics—The abbé de Beauvais—His sermons—He is appointed bishop.

When I related to comte Jean my reconciliation with the duc de Richelieu, and the sum which this treaty had cost me, my brother-in-law flew into the most violent fury; he styled the maréchal a plunderer of the public treasury. Well may the scripture tell us we see the mote in our neighbour's eye, but regard not the beam which is in our own eye. I was compelled to impose silence on comte Jean, or in the height of his rage he would have offered some insult to the old maréchal, who already most heartily disliked him for the familiarity of his tone and manner towards him. I did all in my power to keep these two enemies from coming in each other's way, counselled to that by the maréchale de Mirepoix, whose line of politics was of the most pacific nature; besides I had no inclination for a war carried on in my immediate vicinity, and, for my own part, so far from wishing to harm any one, I quickly forgave every affront offered to myself.

But hold! I perceive I am running on quite smoothly in my own praise. Indeed, my friend, it is well I have taken that office upon myself, for I fear no one else would undertake it. The most atrocious calumnies have been invented against me; I have been vilified both in prose and verse; and, amongst the great number of persons on whom I have conferred the greatest obligations, none has been found with sufficient courage or gratitude to stand forward and undertake my defence. I do not even except madame de Mirepoix, whose conduct towards me in former days was marked by the most studied attention. She came to me one evening, with a face of grief,

"Mercy upon me," cried I, "what ails you?"

"Alas!" replied she, in a piteous tone, "I have just quitted a most afflicted family; their loss is heavy and irreparable. The maréchale de Luxembourg is well nigh distracted with grief."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed I, "can the duchesse de Lauzun be dead?"

"Alas! no."

"Perhaps poor madame de Boufflers?"

"No, my friend."

"Who then is the object of so much regret? Speak; tell me."

"Madame Brillant."

"A friend of the old maréchale's?"

"More than a friend," replied madame de Mirepoix; "her faithful companion; her only companion; her only beloved object, since her lovers and admirers ceased to offer their homage—in a word, her cat."

"Bless me!" cried I, "how you frightened me! but what sort of a cat could this have been to cause so many tears?"

"Is it possible that you do not know madame Brillant, at least by name?"

"I assure you," said I, "this is the very first time I ever heard her name."

"Well, if it be so, I will be careful not to repeat

such a thing to madame de Luxembourg; she would never pardon you for it. Listen, my dear countess," continued madame de Mirepoix; "under the present circumstances it will be sufficient for you to write your name in her visiting-book."

I burst into a fit of laughter.

"It is no joke I promise you," exclaimed the maréchale, "the death of madame Brillant is a positive calamity to madame de Luxembourg. Letters of condolence will arrive from Chanteloup; madame du Deffant will be in deep affliction, and the virtues and amiable qualities of the deceased cat will long furnish subjects of conversation."

"It was then a singularly engaging animal, I presume?"

"On the contrary, one of the most stupid, disagreeable, and dirty creatures of its kind; but still it was the cat of madame de Luxembourg."

And after this funeral oration the maréchale and myself burst into a violent fit of laughter.

When the king joined us, I acquainted him with this death, and my conversation with the maréchale. Louis XV. listened to my recital with an air of gravity; when I had finished, he said,

"The present opportunity is admirably adapted for satisfying the request of one of my retinue, one of the best-hearted creatures, and at the same time one of the silliest men in the kingdom."

"I beg your pardon, sire," cried I, "but what is his name? for the description is so general, that I fear least I should be at a loss to recollect of whom you are speaking."

"You are very ill-natured," cried Louis XV., "and I hardly know whether you deserve to be gratified by hearing the name of the poor gentleman: however, I will tell it to you; he is called Corbin de la Chevrollerie. A few days since this simple young man, having solicited an audience, informed me, that he was desirous of marrying a rich heiress, but that the young lady's

family were resolved she should marry no one who was not previously employed as an ambassador. I expressed my surprise at so strange a caprice, but the poor fellow endeavoured to vindicate his bride's relations, by stating that they were willing to consider him as my ambassador if I would only commission him to carry some message of compliment or condolence. Accordingly I promised to employ him upon the occasion of the first death or marriage which should take place in a ducal family. Now, I think I cannot do better than make him the bearer of my inquiries after the maréchale de Luxembourg."

This idea struck me as highly amusing, and I immediately dispatched a servant to summon M. de la Chevrollerie to the presence of the king, This being done, that gentleman presented himself with all the dignity and importance of one who felt that a mission of high moment was about to be intrusted to him.

His majesty charged him to depart immediately to the house of madame de Luxembourg, and to convey his royal master's sincere condolences for the heavy loss she had sustained in madame Brillant.

M. Corbin de la Chevrollerie departed with much pride and self-complacency upon his embassy: he returned in about half an hour.

"Sire," cried he, "I have fulfilled your royal pleasure to madame de Luxembourg. She desires me to thank you most humbly for your gracious condescension: she is in violent distress for the severe loss she has experienced, and begged my excuse for quitting me suddenly, as she had to superintend the stuffing of the deceased."

"The stuffing!" exclaimed the king; "surely you mean the embalming?"

"No, sire," replied the ambassador, gravely, "the stuffing."

"Monsieur de la Chevrollerie," cried I, bursting into a violent fit of laughter, "do you know in what

degree of relationship the deceased madame Brillant stood to madame de Luxembourg?"

"No, madam," replied the ambassador, gravely, "but I believe she was her aunt, for I heard one of the females in waiting say, that this poor madame Brillant was very old, and that she had lived with her mistress during the last fourteen years."

Thus finished this little jest. However, Louis XV., who was extremely kind to all about him, especially those in his service, shortly after recompensed his simple-minded ambassador, by intrusting him with a commission at once profitable and honourable.

Another event which took place at this period caused no less noise than the death of madame Brillant. At this time mademoiselle Mesnard was, for her many charms of mind and person, the general rage throughout Paris. Courtiers, lawyers, bankers, and citizens crowded alike to offer their homage. Frail as fair, mademoiselle Mesnard received all kindly, and took with gracious smiles the rich gifts showered upon her by her various adorers. The first noblemen of the court, knights of the different orders, farmers-general, all aspired to the honour of ruining themselves for her. She had already satisfied the ruinous propensities of at least a dozen lovers, when the duc de Chaulnes entered the lists, and was fortunate enough to eclipse all his rivals. He might long have enjoyed the preference thus obtained, but for an act of the greatest imprudence of which a lover could be guilty. He was so indiscreet as to invite several of his most intimate friends to sup with himself and mademoiselle Mesnard. Amongst the number was Caron de Beaumarchais, a man possessed of the grace of a prince and the generous profusion of a highwayman. Caron de Beaumarchais attracted the fancy of the fickle mademoiselle Mesnard, a mutual understanding was soon established between them, and in a snug little cottage surrounded by beautiful grounds in the environs of Père la Chaise, the

enamoured lovers frequently met to exchange their soft vows.

Happily the deity who presided over the honour of the duke was carefully watching their proceedings. This guardian angel was no other than madame Duverger, his former mistress, who, unable to bear the desertion of her noble admirer, had vowed, in the first burst of rage and disappointment, to have revenge sooner or later upon her triumphant rival. With this view she spied out all the proceedings of mademoiselle Mesnard, whose stolen interviews and infidelity she was not long in detecting; she even contrived to win over a femme de chambre, by whose connivance she was enabled to obtain possession of several letters containing irrefragable proofs of guilt, and these she immediately forwarded to the duc de Chaulnes.

This proud and haughty nobleman might have pardoned his mistress had she quitted him for a peer of the realm and his equal, but to be supplanted by a mere man of business; an author, too! the disgrace was too horrible for endurance. The enraged lover flew to Beaumarchais, and reproached him bitterly with his treachery; the latter sought to deny the charge, but the duke, losing all self-possession, threw the letters in his face, calling him a base liar. At this insult Beaumarchais, who, whatever his enemies may say of him, was certainly not deficient in courage, demanded instant satisfaction. The duke, by way of answer, seized the man of letters by the collar, Beaumarchais called his servants, who, in their turn, summoned the guard, which speedily arrived accompanied by the commissary, and with much difficulty they succeeded in removing M. de Chaulnes (who appeared to have entirely lost his reason) from the room.

The conduct of the duke appeared to us completely out of place, and he would certainly have answered for it within the walls of the Bastille, had not his family made great intercession for him. On the other hand, Beaumarchais, who eagerly availed himself of every

opportunity of writing memorials, composed one on the subject of his quarrel with M. de Chaulnes, complaining that a great nobleman had dared to force himself into his house, and lay forcible hands on him, as though he were a thief or a felon. The whole of the pamphlet which related to this affair was admirably written, and, like the *Barber of Seville*, marked by a strongly sarcastic vein. However, the thing failed, and the duc de la Vrillière, the sworn enemy of men of wit and talent, caused Beaumarchais to be immediately confined within Fort l'Evêque. So that the offended party was made to suffer the penalty of the offence.

In the same year the comte de Fuentes, ambassador from Spain to the court of Louis XV., took leave of us. He was replaced by the comte d'Aranda, who was in a manner in disgrace with his royal master: this nobleman arrived preceded by a highly flattering reputation. In the first place, he had just completed the destruction of the Jesuits, and this was entitling him to no small thanks and praises from the encyclopedists. Every one knows those two lines of Voltaire's—

> "Aranda dans l'Espagne instruisant les fidèles,
> A l'inquisition vient de rogner les ailes."

The simplicity of comte d'Aranda indemnified us in some degree for the haughty superciliousness of his predecessor. Although no longer young, he still preserved all the tone and vigour of his mind, and only the habit which appeared to have been born with him of reflecting, gave him a slow and measured tone in speaking. His reserved and embarrassed manners were but ill-calculated to show the man as he really was, and it required all the advantages of intimacy to see him in his true value. You may attach so much more credit to what I say of this individual, as I can only add, that he was by no means one of my best friends.

When Louis XV. heard of the nomination of the

comte d'Aranda to the embassy from Spain to France, he observed to me,

"The king of Spain gets rid of his Choiseul by sending him to me."

"Then why not follow so excellent an example, sire?" replied I; "and since your Choiseul is weary of Chanteloup, why not command him upon some political errand to the court of Madrid."

"Heaven preserve me from such a thing," exclaimed Louis XV. "Such a man as he is ought never to quit the kingdom, and I have been guilty of considerable oversight to leave him the liberty of so doing. But to return to comte d'Aranda; he has some merit I understand; still I like not that class of persons around me; they are inexorable censors, who condemn alike every action of my life."

However, not the king's greatest enemy could have found fault with his manner of passing his leisure hours. A great part of each day was occupied in a mysterious manufacture of cases for relics, and one of his valets de chambre, named Turpigny, was intrusted with the commission of purchasing old shrines and reliquaries; he caused the sacred bones, or whatever else they might contain, to be taken out by Grandelatz, one of his almoners, re-adjusted, and then returned to new cases. These reliquaries were distributed by him to his daughters, or any ladies of the court of great acknowledged piety. When I heard of this I mentioned it to the king, who wished at first to conceal the fact; but, as he was no adept at falsehood or disguise, he was compelled to admit the fact.

"I trust, sire," said I, "that you will bestow one of your prettiest and best-arranged reliquaries on me."

"No, no," returned he, hastily, "that cannot be."

"And why not," asked I.

"Because," answered he, "it would be sinful of me. Ask any thing else in my power to bestow, and it shall be yours."

"This was no hypocrisy on the part of Louis XV.,

who, spite of his somewhat irregular mode of life, professed to hold religion in the highest honour and esteem; to all that it proscribed he paid the submission of a child. We had ample proofs of this in the sermons preached at Versailles by the abbé de Beauvais, afterwards bishop of Senetz.

This ecclesiastic, filled with an inconsiderate zeal, feared not openly to attack the king in his public discourses; he even went so far as to interfere with many things of which he was not a competent judge, and which by no means belonged to his jurisdiction: in fact, there were ample grounds for sending the abbé to the Bastille. The court openly expressed its dissatisfaction at this audacity, and for my own part I could not avoid evincing the lively chagrin it caused me. Yet, would you believe it, Louis XV. declared, in a tone from which there was no appeal, that this abbé had merely done his duty, and that those who had been less scrupulous in the performance of theirs, would do well to be silent on the subject. This was not all; the cardinal de la Roche Aymon, his grand almoner, refused to sanction the nomination of M. de Beauvais to the bishopric, under the pretext of his not being nobly descended.

M. de Beyons, bishop of Carcossone, a prelate of irreproachable character, was deeply distressed to find that the want of birth would exclude M. de Beauvais from the dignities of his holy profession. He went to discuss the matter with the grand almoner, who again advanced his favourite plea for excluding M. de Beauvais. "My lord," replied M. de Beyons, "if I believed that nobility of descent were the chief requisite for our advancement in our blessed calling, I would trample my crosier under foot, and renounce for ever all church dignities."

M. de Beyons sought the king, and loudly complained to him of the infatuation and obstinacy of M. de la Roche Aymon. Louis XV. however commanded that M. de Beauvais should be appointed to the first vacant

see, and when the grand almoner repeated his objections to the preferment, the king answered, "Monsieur le cardinal, in the days of our blessed Saviour the apostles had no need to present their genealogical tree, duly winessed and attested. It is my pleasure to make M. de Beauvais a bishop; let that end the discussion of the matter."

The command was too peremptory to admit of any course but instant and entire submission.

CHAPTER X.

M. D——n and madame de Blessac—Anecdote—The rendezvous and the ball—The wife of Gaubert—They wish to give her to the king—Intrigues—Their results—Letter from the duc de la Vrillière to the countess—Reply—Reconciliation.

Amongst the pages of the chapel was one whom the king distinguished so greatly, that he raised him to the rank of a gentleman of the bedchamber, and confided to his charge the cabinet of medals, for which he had imbibed a taste since his *liaison* with madame de Pompadour. This esteemed page was named M. D——n, who united to the most amiable wit a varied and deep knowledge of men and things. He had had adventures at an age when they are only usually just understood, and talked of them with the utmost indiscretion. But this so far from doing him any injury in the eyes of the world, only served to make him the more admired; for women in general have an inclination for those who do not respect their reputation.

At the period I allude to a madame de Blessac, a very well-looking woman, took upon herself to be very

kindly disposed towards the gentleman-in-waiting. She told him so, and thereupon M. de D——n ranged himself under her banner, and swore eternal constancy. However, the lady, by some accident, became greatly smitten with the prince de la Trimouille, and without quitting the little keeper of medals, gave him a lord for a substitute. M. D——n soon learnt this fact, that he was not the sole possessor of a heart which formed all his joy and glory. He found he was deceived, and he swore to be revenged.

Now the prince de la Trimouille had for his mistress mademoiselle Lubert, an opera-dancer, very pretty and extraordinarily silly. M. D——n went to her; "Mademoiselle," said he, "I come to offer my services to you in the same way that M. de Trimouille has offered his to madame de Blessac, with whom I was on exceedingly intimate terms."

The services of young D——n were accepted, and he was happy. He then wrote to his former mistress, saying, that anxious to give her a proof of his sincere attachment he had visited mademoiselle Lubert, that he might leave her at leisure to receive the visits of the prince de la Trimouille.

Madame de Blessac, stung to the quick, quarrelled with the prince, who was excessively enraged with his rival; and there certainly would have been an affair between these two gentlemen, had not the king preserved the peace by sending his gentleman to St. Petersburg as *attaché* to the embassy. M. D——n went to Russia therefore, and on his return came to see me, and is now one of the most welcome and agreeable of the men of my private circle.

As to madame de Blessac, she continued to carry on the war in grand style. Her husband dying she married again to a foolish count, three parts ruined, and who speedily dissipated the other quarter of his own fortune and the whole of his wife's. Madame Ramoski then attacked the rich men of the day one after another. One alone stood out against her; it was

M. de la Garde, who had been one of my admirers. Madame Ramoski wrote to him; he did not answer. At length she determined on visiting him, and wrote him a note, to say she should call upon him about six o'clock in the evening. What did M. de la Garde? Why he gave a ball on that very evening; and, when madame Ramoski reached his hotel, she found it illuminated. As she had come quite unprepared she was compelled to return as she came, very discontentedly.

But to leave madame de Blessac and M. D——n, and to talk of my own matters. We had at this period a very great alarm at the château, caused by the crime of a man, who preferred rather to assassinate his wife than to allow her to dishonour him. It is worthy of narration.

A petty shopkeeper of Paris, named Gaubert, who lived in the rue de la Montagne Sainte-Genevieve, had recently married a woman much younger than himself. From the Petit Pont to the rue Mouffetard, madame Gaubert was talked of for her lovely face and beautiful figure; she was the Venus of the quarter. Everybody paid court to her, but she listened to none of her own rank, for her vanity suggested that she deserved suitors of a loftier rank.

Her husband was very jealous. Unfortunately M. Gaubert had for cousin one of the valets of the king: this man, who knew the taste of his master, thought how he could best turn his pretty cousin to account. He spoke to her of the generosity of Louis XV., of the grandeur of Versailles, and of the part which her beauty entitled her to play there. In fact, he so managed to turn the head of this young woman, that she begged him to obtain for her a place in the king's favour. Consequently Girard (that was his name) went to madame de Langeac, and told her the affair as it was. She, pleased with an opportunity of injuring me, went to Paris, and betook herself *incog.* to the shop of madame Gaubert. She found her charming, and spoke of her to the duc de la Vrillière, and both agreed to show

her portrait to his majesty. But how to procure this portrait? Her husband was her very shadow, and never left her. *Le petit saint*, who was never at a loss, issued a *lettre de cachet* against him, and the unfortunate man was shut up in Fort l'Evêque. It was not until the portrait was finished that he was set at liberty.

He returned to his home without guessing at the motives of his detention, but he learnt that his wife had had her portrait painted during his absence, and his jealousy was set to work. Soon a letter from Girard, a fatal letter, which fell into his hands, convinced him of the injury done him. He took his wife apart, and, feigning a resignation which he did not feel, "My love," he said, "I loved thee, I love thee still; I thought, too, that thou wert content with our competence, and wouldst not have quitted thine husband for any other in the world: I have been convinced otherwise. A letter from Girard informs me, that with thine own consent the king, whom thy portrait has pleased, desires to see thee this very day. It is a misfortune, but we must submit. Only before thou art established at Versailles, I should wish thee to dine with me once more. You can invite cousin Girard too, for I owe him something for what he has done for thee."

The young wife promised to return and see her husband. That evening at the performance at the court she was seated in the same box with the marquise de Langeac; the king's glass was directed towards her the whole time, and at the termination of the spectacle it was announced to her, that she was to sleep at the château the next evening. The project was never realized.

The next day, according to promise, the young wife went to Paris with the valet. She informed her husband of the success which had befallen her, and he appeared delighted. Dinner being ready, they seated themselves at table, eat and drank. Girard began to laugh at his cousin for his complaisance, when suddenly all desire to jest left him. He experienced most

horrible pains, and his cousin suffered as well as himself. "Wretches!" said Gaubert to them, "did you think I would brook dishonour? No, no! I have deceived you both the better to wreak my vengeance. I am now happy. Neither king nor valet shall ever possess my wife. I have poisoned you, and you must die." The two victims implored his pity. "Yes," said he to his wife, "thy sufferings pain me, and I will free you from them." He then plunged a knife to her heart; and, turning to Girard, said, "As for thee, I hate thee too much to kill thee; die." And he left him.

The next day M. de Sartines came and told me the whole story. He had learnt them from the valet, who had survived his poisoning for some hours. Gaubert could not be found, and it was feared that he would attempt some desperate deed. No one dared mention it to the king, but the captain of the guards and the first gentleman in waiting took every possible precaution; and when Louis XV. asked for the young female who was to be brought to him, they told him that she had died of a violent distemper. It was not until some days afterwards that the terror which pervaded the château ceased. They had found the body of the unfortunate Gaubert on the banks of the Seine.

In spite of what had passed, the duc de la Vrillière had the impudence to present himself to me. I treated him with disdain, reproaching him and Langeac for their conduct. He left me in despair, and wrote me the following letter:—

"Madame la comtesse,—Your anger kills me. I am guilty, but not so much so as you may imagine. The duty of my office compels me to do many things which are disagreeable to me. In the affair for which you have so slightingly treated me there was no intent to injure you, but only to procure for the king an amusement which should make him the more estimate your charms and your society. Do not doubt this intent I beseech you. Forgive a fault in which my heart

bore no share; I am sufficiently miserable, and shall not know repose until I be reinstated in your good graces.

"As for the poor marchioness she is no more to blame than myself. She feels for you as much esteem as attachment, and is anxious to prove it at any opportunity. I beseech you not to treat her rigorously. Think that we only work together for the good of the king, and that it would be unjust of you to hate us because we have endeavoured to please this excellent prince. I hope that, contented with this justification, you will not refuse to grant me the double amnesty which I ask of your goodness."

I replied thus:—

"Your letter, monsieur le duc, seduces me no more than your words. I know you well, and appreciate you fully. I was ignorant up to this time, that amongst the duties of your office, certain such functions were imposed upon you. It appears that you attend to them as well as to others, and I sincerely compliment you thereupon; I beg of you to announce it in the *Court Kalendar.* It will add, I am convinced, to the universal esteem in which you are held.

"As to madame de Langeac, she is even more insignificant than you, and that is not saying much. I thank her for her esteem and attachment, but can dispense with any marks of them; no good can come from such a one as she. Thus, M. le duc, keep quiet both of you, and do not again attempt measures which may compromise me. Do your business and leave me to mine.

"I am, with all due consideration,

"Your servant,

"COMTESSE DU BARRI."

I mentioned this to the king, who insisted on reconciling me with *le petit saint,* who came and knelt to me. I granted the pardon sought out of regard for Louis XV.; but from that moment the contempt I felt for the duke increased an hundredfold.

CHAPTER XI.

Conversation with the king—Marriage of the comte d'Artois—Intrigues—The place of lady of honour—The maréchale de Mirepoix—The comtesse de Forcalquier and madame du Barri—The comtesse de Forcalquier and madame de Boucault.

The king was much annoyed at the indifference I evinced for all state secrets, and frequently observed to me, "You are not at all like madame de Pompadour: she was never satisfied unless she knew all that was going on, and was permitted to take an active part in every transaction; she would frequently scold me for not telling her things of which I was myself ignorant. She was at the bottom of the most secret intrigues, and watched every turn of my countenance, as though she sought to read in my eyes the inmost thoughts of my mind. Never," continued the king, "did woman more earnestly desire supreme command; and so completely had she learned to play my part, that I have frequently surprised her giving private instructions to my ambassadors, differing altogether from what I myself had dictated to them. Upon the same principle she maintained at various courts envoys and ministers, who acted by her orders, and in her name; she even succeeded in obtaining the friendship of the grave and austere Marie Thérèse, who ultimately carried her condescension so far, as only to address the marchioness by the title of 'cousin' and 'dear friend.' I must confess, however, that these proceedings on the part of madame de Pompadour were by no means agreeable to me, and I even prefer your ignorance of politics to her incessant interference with them."

This was said by Louis XV. upon the occasion of the

approaching marriage of the comte d'Artois, the object of universal cabal and court intrigue to all but myself, who preserved perfect tranquillity amidst the general excitement that prevailed.

Various reasons made the marriage of this prince a matter of imperative necessity. In the first place, the open gallantry of the young count had attracted a crowd of disreputable personages of both sexes to Versailles, and many scandalous adventures occurred within the château itself: secondly, a motive still more important in the eyes of Louis XV., originated in the circumstance, of neither the marriage of the dauphin nor that of the comte de Provence having been blessed with any offspring. The king began to despair of seeing any descendants in a direct line, unless indeed heaven should smile upon the wedded life of the comte d'Artois. Louis XV. disliked the princes of the blood, and the bare idea that the duc d'Orleans might one day wield his sceptre would have been worse than death.

Many alliances were proposed for the prince. Marie Josèphe, infanta of Spain, was then in her twentieth year, and consequently too old. The princesse Marie-Françoise-Bénédictine-Anne-Elizabeth-Josèphe-Antonine-Laurence-Ignace-Thérèse-Gertrude-Marguerite-Anne-Rose, &c. &c., of Portugal, although younger than the first-mentioned lady, was yet considered as past the age that would have rendered her a suitable match for so youthful a bridegroom. The daughter of any of the electoral houses of Germany was not considered an eligible match, and the pride of the house of Bourbon could not stoop to so ignoble an alliance. There was no alternative left therefore, but to return to the house of Savoy, and take a sister of the comtesse de Provence. This proposal was well received by the royal family, with the exception of the dauphiness, who dreaded the united power and influence of the two sisters, if circumstances should ever direct it against herself or her wishes; and I heard from good authority, that both the imperial Marie Thérèse and her daughter made

many remonstrances to the king upon the subject. "The empress," said Louis XV., one day, "believes that things are still managed here as in the days of the marquise de Pompadour and the duc de Choiseul. Thank heaven, I am no longer under the dominion of my friends and her pensionaries. I shall follow my own inclinations, and consult, in the marriage of my grandson, the interests of France rather than those of Austria."

The little attention paid by Louis XV. to the representations of Marie Thérèse furnished my enemies with a fresh pretext for venting their spleen. They accused me of having been bribed by the court of Turin, which ardently desired a second alliance with France. I was most unjustly accused, for I can with truth affirm, that the comte de la Marmora, ambassador from Piedmont to Paris, neither by word nor deed made any attempt to interest me in his success. The king was the first person who informed me of the contemplated marriage, and my only fault (if it could be called one) was having approved of the match.

More than one intrigue was set on foot within the château to separate the princes. Many were the attempts to sow the seeds of dissension between the dauphin and the comte d'Artois, as well as to embroil the dauphin with *monsieur*. The first attempt proved abortive, but the faction against *monsieur* succeeded so far as to excite a lasting jealousy and mistrust in the mind of Marie Antoinette. This princess was far from contemplating the marriage of the comte d'Artois with any feelings of pleasure, and when her new sister-in-law became a mother, she bewailed her own misfortune in being without children with all the feelings of a young and affectionate heart. Heaven did not, however, always deny her the boon she so ardently desired.

You will readily believe that the same anxiety prevailed upon the occasion of this approaching marriage as had existed at the unions of the dauphin and the comte de Provence, to obtain the various posts and

places the ambition of different persons led them to desire in the establishment of the newly married pair. Wishing on my own part to offer the maréchale de Mirepoix a proof of my high estimation of her friendship towards me, I inquired of her whether a superior employment about the person of the comtesse d'Artois would be agreeable to her?

"Alas! my dear creature," replied the good-natured maréchale, "I am too old now to bear the toil and confinement of any service. The post of lady of honour would suit me excellently well as far as regards the income attached to it, but by no means agree with my inclinations as far as discharging its functions goes. You see I am perfectly candid with you. Listen to me; if you really wish to oblige me, you can do this—give the title to another, and bestow the pecuniary part of the engagement on me. In that manner you will be able to gratify two persons at the same time."

"I will endeavour," said I, "to meet your wishes as far as I possibly can, and you may be assured that you shall derive some advantage from this marriage."

And I kept my word by shortly after obtaining for the maréchale a sum of 50,000 livres; a most needful supply, for the poor maréchale had to re-furnish her house, her present fittings-up being no longer endurable by the eye of modish taste; she likewise received an augmentation of 20,000 livres to her pension. This proceeding was highly acceptable to her, and the king afforded his assistance with the best possible grace. He could be generous, and do things with a good grace when he pleased.

The refusal of the maréchale, which it was agreed we should keep secret, obliged me to cast my eyes upon a worthy substitute, and I at length decided upon selecting the comtesse de Forcalquier, a lady who possessed every charm which can charm and attract, joined to a faultless reputation; and, setting aside her strict intimacy with myself, the court (envious as it is) could find no fault with her. I was convinced she would not be

long in acquiring an ascendency over the mind of the princess, and I was equally well assured she would never turn this influence against myself; this was a point of no small importance to me.

Madame de Forcalquier most ardently desired the place of lady of honour, without flattering herself with any hopes of obtaining it; and, not liking to ask me openly for it, she applied to the duc de Cossé. I felt some regret that she had gone to work in so circuitous a manner, and in consequence wrote her the following note:—

"MADAM,—I am aware that you are desirous of obtaining the post of lady of honour. You should not have forgotten that I am sufficiently your friend to have forwarded your wishes by every possible exertion. Why did you apply to a third person in preference to seeking my aid? I really am more than half angry with you for so doing. Believe me, my friends need not the intervention of any mediator to secure my best services. You, too, will regret not having made your first application to me, when I tell you that I was reserving for you the very place you were seeking by so circuitous a route. Yes, before you had asked it, the post of lady of honour was yours. I might have sought in vain for a person more eminently qualified for the office than yourself, or one in whom I could place more unlimited confidence. Come, my friend, I pray of you, not to thank me, who have found sufficient reward in the pleasure of obliging you, but to acknowledge the extreme kindness and alacrity with which his majesty has forwarded your wishes.

"Believe me, dear madam,

"Yours, very sincerely,

"THE COMTESSE DU BARRI."

Madame de Forcalquier was not long in obeying the summons contained in my note; she embraced me with the warmest gratitude and friendship, delighted at finding herself so eligibly established at court, for at that period every person regarded the comte d'Artois as

the only hope of the monarchy; and, blinded by the universal preference bestowed on him, the young prince flattered himself that the crown would infallibly ornament his brows. I have been told, that when first the queen's pregnancy was perceived, a general lamentation was heard throughout the castle, and all ranks united in deploring an event, which removed the comte d'Artois from the immediate succession to the throne.

Up to the present moment I knew madame de Forcalquier only as one whose many charms, both of mind and person, joined to great conversational powers and the liveliest wit, had rendered her the idol of society, and obtained for her the appellation of *Bellissima.* I knew not that this woman, so light and trifling in appearance, was capable of one of those lively and sincere attachments, which neither time nor change of fortune could destroy or diminish. She had a particular friend, a madame Boucault, the widow of a stockbroker, and she was anxious to contribute to her well-doing. With this view she solicited of me the place of lady in waiting for this much-esteemed individual. Astonished at the request I put a hasty negative on it.

"If you refuse me this fresh favour," said madame de Forcalquier, "you will prevent me from profiting by your kindness to myself."

"And why so?" inquired I.

"I owe to madame Boucault," answered she, "more than my life; I am indebted to her for tranquillity, honour, and the high estimation in which the world has been pleased to hold me. I have now an opportunity of proving my gratitude, and I beseech of you to assist my endeavours."

"But tell me, first," cried I, "what is the nature of this very important service you say madame de Boucault has rendered you; is it a secret, or may I hear it?"

"Certainly," replied the countess, "although the recital is calculated to bring the blush of shame into my cheek. Are we alone, and secure from interruption?"

I rang, and gave orders that no person should be suffered to disturb us; after which madame de Forcalquier proceeded as follows:—

"I was scarcely seventeen years old when my parents informed me that they had disposed of my hand, and that I must prepare myself to receive a husband immediately. My sentiments were not inquired into, nor, to confess the truth, was such an investigation usual, or deemed a matter of any import. A young female of any rank has no voice in any transaction till the day which follows her marriage; until then her wishes are those of her family, and her desires bounded by the rules of worldly etiquette. I had scarcely conversed twice or thrice with my future lord, and then only for a few minutes at a time, before he conducted me to the foot of the altar, there to pronounce the solemn vow which bound me his for life. I had scarcely seen him, and barely knew whether he was agreeable or disagreeable. He was neither young nor old, handsome nor ugly, pleasing nor displeasing; just one of those persons of whom the world is principally composed; one of those men who enter or leave a saloon without the slightest curiosity being excited respecting him. I had been told that I ought to love my husband, and accordingly I taught myself to do so; but scarcely had the honey moon waned, than my fickle partner transferred his affections from me to one of my attendants; and to such a height did his guilty passion carry him, that he quitted his home for Italy, carrying with him the unfortunate victim of his seductive arts. It was during his absence that I first became acquainted with madame Boucault; she was my own age, and equally unfortunate in her domestic life; the same tastes, griefs, and a great similarity of temper and disposition soon united us in the bonds of the firmest friendship; but as she possessed a stronger and more reasonable mind than I did, she forgot her own sorrows to administer to mine. However, if the whole truth must be owned, I ought to confess that my chief con-

solation was derived from a young cousin of my own, who freely lavished upon me that unbounded affection I would fain have sought from my husband.

"Meanwhile, wearied of his folly, this latter returned; and, after having transferred his capricious fancies to at least half a dozen mistresses, he finished where he should have began by attaching himself to her, who, as his wife, had every claim to his homage. Men are unaccountable creatures, but unfortunately for my husband his senses returned too late; my heart was too entirely occupied to restore him to that place he had so hastily vacated. My affections were no longer mine to bestow, but equally shared by my estimable friend madame Boucault and my young and captivating cousin. I was a bad hand at dissimulating, and M. de Forcalquier perceived enough of my sentiments to excite his jealous suspicions, and immediately removed with me to one of his estates.

"However, my cousin (whom my husband was far from suspecting) and madame Boucault accompanied me in my retreat: there myself and my admirer, more thrown together than we had been at Paris, began insensibly to lay aside the restraint we had hitherto imposed on our inclinations, and commenced a train of imprudences which would quickly have betrayed us had not friendship watched over us. The excellent madame Boucault, in order to save my reputation, took so little care to preserve her own, that M. de Forcalquier was completely caught by her manœuvre. One morning, finding me alone, he said,

"'Madam, I am by no means satisfied with what is going on here. Your friend is wholly devoid of shame and modesty; she has been with us but one short fortnight, and is now the open and confessed mistress of your cousin.'

"'Sir,' exclaimed I, trembling for what was to follow, 'you are, you must be mistaken; the thing is impossible. Madame Boucault is incapable——'

"'Nonsense, madam,' replied M. de Forcalquier;

'I know what I am saying. Several things have induced me to suspect for a long while what I now assert with perfect confidence of its truth; but if you are still incredulous, behold this proof of guilt which I found but just now in your cousin's chamber.'

" So saying, my husband put into my hands a letter written by my cousin evidently to some female in the château, whom he solicited to admit him that evening to the usual place of rendezvous, where he flattered himself their late misunderstanding would be cleared up.

" After having read, or, to speak more correctly, guessed at the contents of this fatal letter, I conjured my husband to replace it where he had found it, lest his guests should suspect him of having dishonourably obtained possession of their secret. He quitted me, and I hastened in search of my friend: I threw myself on my knees before her, and related all that had passed, accusing myself of the basest selfishness in having consented to save my honour at the expense of hers; then rising with renewed courage, I declared my intention of confessing my imprudence to my husband. Madame Boucault withheld me. 'Do you doubt my regard for you?' asked she; 'if indeed you do justice to my sincere attachment to you, permit me to make this one sacrifice for your safety. Leave your husband at liberty to entertain his present suspicions respecting me, but grant me one favour in your turn. Speak to your cousin; request him to quit the château, for should he remain the truth will be discovered, and then, my friend, you are lost past my endeavours to save you.'

" Less generous than madame Boucault, I consented to follow her advice. However, I have never forgotten her generous devotion; and now that the opportunity has presented itself of proving my gratitude, I beseech of you, my dear countess, to aid me in the discharge of my debt of gratitude."

As madame de Forcalquier finished speaking, I threw myself into her arms. "From this moment," cried I,

"madame Boucault is my dear and esteemed protégée; and if I have any influence over the mind of the king, she shall be appointed lady in waiting to our young princess. Such a woman is a treasure, and I heartily thank you for having mentioned her to me."

CHAPTER XII.

Marriage of madame Boucault—The comte de Bourbon Busset—Marriage of comte d'Hargicourt—Disgrace of the comte de Broglie—He is replaced by M. Lemoine—The king complains of ennui—Conversations on the subject—Entry into Paris.

Spite of the merit of madame Boucault, and the many eulogiums I bestowed on her whilst relating her history to the king, I could not immediately obtain the post madame de Forcalquier had requested for this paragon of friends. His majesty replied to me by saying, that no doubt so many virtues merited a high reward, but that ere madame Boucault could be appointed lady in waiting to his grandaughter, she must be presented at court under some other name than the one she now bore. "Oh, if that be all, sire," replied I, "it will soon be effected. Ladies who have the good fortune to possess a rich dowry and powerful friends need never look far for a choice of husbands. Only let madame Boucault have reason to reckon upon your patronage, and she will have no lack of admirers."

The king, always ready to oblige me, caused it to be understood throughout the château that he was desirous of seeing madame Boucault well established, as he had it in contemplation to confide to her a place of great trust. Immediately a score of suitors presented them-

selves; the preference was given to the comte de Bourbon Busset as the person most calculated in every respect to answer our purpose; he possessed elegant manners, an unblemished reputation, and a descent so illustrious as to be traced even to the reigning family. No sooner were the celebrations of this marriage over, than I procured the formal appointment of madame de Bourbon Busset to the post of lady in waiting to the new princess. This nomination tended greatly to increase the high opinion entertained of the judgment and discrimination of the comtesse de Forcalquier, and you may easily believe, from the friendship I bore this lady, that I fully entered into her triumph on the occasion.

When the comtesse de Bourbon Busset came to return me her acknowledgments for what I had done, she accompanied it with a request for a fresh interference on my part: this was to obtain for her husband the title of duke and peer. Accordingly I mentioned her wishes to the king, observing at the same time how very surprising it was that one so nearly related to the house of Bourbon should not have reached the honours of the ducal peerage: to which Louis XV. replied, that he had no desire to increase the number of princes of the blood, of whom there were quite sufficient of legitimate birth without placing the illegitimate upon the same footing; that Louis XIV. had been a sufficient warning of the folly of acting too indulgently towards these latter, who were only so many additional enemies to the royal authority. To all this I answered, that it was not fitting to treat the family of Bourbon Busset, however illegitimate might be its origin, as though it merely belonged to the *petite noblesse*, &c.; but my arguments were in vain, and, as the proverb says, "I talked to the wind." My friends recommended me not to press the subject, and the matter ended there. However, in order to smooth the refusal as much as possible, I procured M. de Bourbon Busset the appointment of first gentleman usher to the young prince.

The establishment of the comtesse d'Artois was now formed. M. de Chéglus, bishop of Cahors, had the post of first almoner; and strange to say, although a prelate, was a man of irreproachable virtue; he had little wit but strong sense, and was better known by his many charitable deeds than the brilliancy of his sayings. He was eminently suited for the office now conferred on him; and those who knew him best were the least surprised to find the nomination had fallen on him.

I also procured a post in the establishment of the young couple for my sister-in-law, the comtesse d'Hargicourt. Her maiden name was Fumel, an ancient family in Guienne, and M. de Fumel, her father, was governor of the Château Trompette at Bordeaux. This marriage had at first encountered many difficulties from the deadly hatred which existed in the château against us. Comte Jean perceiving that things were going against us, applied to the king himself for assistance in the affair. Louis XV. could not endure him, but his dislike was manifested only by an uneasy timidity in his presence, and he freely granted any request that would the soonest free him from his presence. The king acted upon the same principle in the present conjuncture; he bestowed a million of livres upon the comte d'Hargicourt, that is to say, 500,000 livres to be employed in paying the debts of the comte de Fumel, and in freeing his estates from a dowry of 60,000 livres to be paid to his daughter on her marriage, with various other clearances and payments; besides this my brother-in-law, comte d'Hargicourt, was appointed captain in the prince's Swiss guards, one of the most honourable commissions that could have been conferred on him.

The comte de Crussel and the prince d'Henin were named captains of the guard to M. d'Artois. This prince d'Henin was of such diminutive stature that he was sometimes styled, by way of jest, the "prince of dwarfs," or "the dwarf of princes." He was the be-

loved nephew of the maréchale de Mirepoix, whose fondness could not supply him with the sense he so greatly needed; he was besides very profligate, and continually running into some difficulty or other by his eager pursuit after pleasure. It is related of him, that the duc de Lauraguais, wearied with seeing the prince d'Henin for ever fluttering about his mistress, mademoiselle Arnoult, drew up a consultation, to inquire whether it were possible to die of ennui: this he submitted to several physicians and celebrated lawyers, who having united in replying affirmatively, he caused the consultation with its answer to be forwarded to the prince d'Henin, warning him henceforward to cease his visits to mademoiselle d'Arnoult; or, in the event of her death, he would certainly be taken up as a party concerned in effecting it.

The opposite party was now more irritated than ever by the many places and employments I caused to be given either to my own friends, or to those for whom they solicited my interest. The duchesse de Grammont, flattering herself that she might now take the field against me with advantage, arrived in Paris one fine morning from Chanteloup. Those about me were full of wrath, I know not for why, at her arrival, but I explained to them, that they were mistaken in supposing madame de Grammont an exile; she had voluntarily accompanied her brother into his retreat, and when that was no longer agreeable to her she returned to Paris. However, her journey did neither good nor harm; she had many invitations to fêtes given in honour of herself, was frequently asked to dinners, balls, &c., but that was all; no person set their wits to work to reinstate her in the good graces of the king. I soon comprehended the forlorn hopes of my poor enemy, and my former animosity soon gave way to the pity with which she inspired me.

About the period of the marriage of the comtesse d'Artois, an individual of some eminence fell into disgrace; this was the comte de Broglie. This gentleman,

as you know, was private minister to Louis XV., intrusted for some time past with his correspondence, and affected the airs of a favourite. He solicited upon the present occasion the honour of going to meet the princess at the bridge of Beauvoisin, a request which was granted. This was not sufficient for him; he begged for a month's leave of absence, with permission to proceed to Turin: this depended on the duc d'Aiguillon, who was by no means partial to the comte de Broglie. He said to me when speaking of him,

"I feel no inclination to oblige this minister; on the contrary, he may wait long enough for what he desires as far as I am concerned."

"I fear he will be greatly offended with you," answered I.

"Oh, never mind that," replied the duke; "if he grows sullen about it, why well; if he is loud and vehement, better still; and should his anger lead him to the commission of any act of folly, depend upon it we will take advantage of it."

As I foresaw, the comte de Broglie was deeply offended, and wrote to the duc d'Aiguillon a letter full of imprudent expressions. This was exactly what this latter desired, who eagerly carried and read the paper to the different members of the council, who heard it with every expression of surprise and displeasure; the king viewed it as a piece of open rebellion, and resolved to punish the writer with his heaviest displeasure; the duc d'Aiguillon asked nothing better, and ere an hour had elapsed, the duc de la Vrillière received orders to draw up a *lettre de cachet*, in which the king expressed his discontent of the comte de Broglie, deprived him of the commission he had given him to go and receive the princess of Savoy, and exiled him to Buffee, one of his estates near Angoulême.

This was a matter of great talk at the château; no one could imagine what had made the comte de Broglie conduct himself so foolishly. It was at this period that M. de Marchault said of him, when he saw

him pass his house on his way to Buffee, "He has the ministry by the tail."

M. de Broglie having gone, his majesty was compelled to look out for another confident, and raised to that eminence M. Lemoine, clerk of his closet. M. Lemoine in an inferior station had shown himself competent to fill the highest offices in the state. Such abilities are rare. He was an excellent lawyer, admirable chancellor of exchequer, and had the king said to him, "I make thee a general," he would, the next day, have commanded armies and gained victories. Despite his merit he lived long unknown: the reason was obvious—he knew nothing of intrigue; and his wife, though pretty, was discreet; and these are not the means to advance a man at court.

Louis XV., who knew something of men when he chose to study them, was not slow in detecting the talent of Lemoine, and in consequence gave him that station in which de Broglie had been installed. No sooner had Lemoine glanced over the affairs submitted to his control, than he became master of them as much as though they had occupied the whole of his life, and in a short time he gave to his situation an importance which it had never before reached. Unwilling, however, to incur hatred, he enveloped himself in profound mystery, so much so that nobody, with the exception of Messrs. d'Aiguillon and de Sartines, knew any thing of his labours. This pleased the king, who was averse from publicity.

The duc d'Aiguillon could not conceal his joy at being freed from de Broglie, his most troublesome colleague. It was a grand point gained for him, as he could now make sure of the post of secretary-at-war, the main object of his ambition. He wished to be placed in the duc de Choiseul's position, and to effect this he redoubled his attentions towards the king, who, though not really regarding him, at length treated him as the dearest of his subjects. There are inexplicable

mysteries in weak characters; obstinacy alarms them, and they yield because they hate resistance.

The king was *ennuied* to death, and became daily more dull and heavy. I saw his gloom without knowing how to disperse it, but it did not make me particularly uncomfortable. Occupied with my dear duc de Brissac I almost forgot his majesty for him: the maréchale de Mirepoix, who had more experience than I had in the affairs at Versailles, and who knew the king well, was alarmed at my negligence, and spoke to me of it.

"Do you not see," she said, one day, "what a crisis is at hand?"

"What crisis?" I asked.

"The king is dying of ennui."

"True."

"Does it not alarm you?" said the maréchale.

"Why should it?"

"What makes him so? Think well when I tell you that your mortal enemy has seized on Louis XV.; your most redoubtable enemy, *ennui!*"

"Very well; but what would you have me do?"

"You must amuse him."

"That is easier said than done."

"You are right, but it is compulsory. Believe me, kings are not moulded like other men: early disgusted with all things, they only exist in a variety of pleasures; what pleases them this evening will displease them to-morrow; they wish to be happy in a different way. Louis XV. is more kingly in this respect than any other. You must devise amusements for him."

"Alas," I replied, "how? Shall I give him a new tragedy of la Harpe's,—he will yawn; an opera of Marmontel,—he will go to sleep. Heavens! how unfortunate I am!"

"Really, my dear," replied the maréchale, "I cannot advise you; but I can quote a powerful example. In such a case, madame de Pompadour would have admitted a rival near the throne."

"Madame de Pompadour was very amiable my dear," I replied, "and I would have done so once or twice, but the part of Mother Gourdan does not suit me; I prefer that of her young ladies."

At these words the maréchale laughed, whilst I made a long grave face. At this instant comte Jean entered, and exclaimed,

"Really, ladies, you present a singular contrast. May I ask you, sister, what causes this sorrow? What ails you?"

"Oh, brother!" was my response, "the king is dying of ennui."

"That is no marvel," said my brother-in-law.

"And to rouse him," I added, "it is necessary, the maréchale says, that I must take a pretty girl by the hand, and present her to the king with these words: 'Sire, having found that you grow tired of me, I present this lady to you, that you may amuse yourself with her.'"

"That would be very fine," replied comte Jean; "it would show him that you had profited by my advice." Then, whispering in my ear, "You know, sister, I am capable of the greatest sacrifices for the king."

"What are you saying, comte Jean?" asked the maréchale, who had heard some words.

"I said to my sister," answered he, coolly, "that she ought to be executed to please the king."

"And you, too, brother," I cried.

"Yes, sister," said he, with a theatrical tone, "I see the dire necessity, and submit to it unrepiningly. Let us yield to fate, or rather, let us so act as to make it favourable to us. The king requires some amusement, and let us find him a little wench. We must take heed not to present any fine lady: no, no; by all the devils——! Excuse me, maréchale, 'tis a habit I have."

"It is nature, you mean," replied the maréchale:

"the nightingale is born to sing, and you, comte Jean, was born to swear; is not that true?"

"*Morbleu*, madam, you are right."

After this conversation the maréchale went out, and comte Jean departed to arrange his plans for the king's amusement.

However, the ennui of Louis XV. was somewhat dissipated by the tidings of the various incidents which occurred at the grand entry of the dauphin and dauphiness into Paris. We learnt that the duc de Brissac, on receiving the dauphiness, as governor of Paris, said, "Madam, you see about you two hundred thousand lovers." He was right; the princess looked like an angel. I had taken a mortal aversion to her. Alas! circumstances have too fully avenged me: this unfortunate queen loses popularity daily; her perfidious friends have sacrificed her to their interests. I pity her.

CHAPTER XIII.

Chassé the actor—His letter to the countess—He comes to sing to her—Comte Jean finds a plaything for the king—Ursule Noblin—Conversation with the chancellor—Intrigue detected.

Whilst my honoured brother-in-law, like a faithful subject, was seeking for a toy for the king's amusement, I also endeavoured to find a means of diverting him. I had heard of a celebrated singer, who had retired from the opera; he was very old, but Louis XV. had been much attached to him in his day, and he still preserved the freshness of his voice—I mean Chassé; who, although noble, had taken to the boards as much

from love of pleasure as aversion from poverty. He had obtained great success as an actor and singer, and the folly of women had added not a little to his reputation.

Chassé had his intrigues, and the singular glory of having caused a duel between two women; a Polish woman fought a Frenchwoman in the Bois de Boulogne on his account; our countrywoman was wounded; after her recovery she was shut up in a convent, and the Pole received an order to quit the country. Chassé remained at home during the time this affair was rife, like a woman who has been fought for by two adorers; he thus received the visits of those who came to compliment him. The king sent him a message by the duc de Richelieu, desiring him to terminate this parade. Chassé replied,

"Tell his majesty, that it is not my fault but that of Providence, which has made me the most amiable man in the kingdom."

"Know, vagabond," replied the duc de Richelieu, "that you are only third in consideration; the king comes before you, and I after the king."

One day, at the first performance at the *Comédie Française*, Chassé came, but had forgotten his admission ticket. The person at the door, who did not know him, refused to let him enter. The singer insisted, grew angry, and at length said,

"Sir, I am Chassé from the opera."

"Very well," replied the man, "and you shall also be *chassé* (driven away) from the *Comédie Française*," and shut the door in his face.

Such was the personage whom I was advised to produce to the king. I did not foresee the slightest difficulty, and wrote to engage him to come and sing at my house at a supper I was about to give to his majesty. My surprise was not small when I received the following letter, sealed with armorial bearings:—

"MADAME LA COMTESSE,—I have received your invitation; I beg of you to accept the assurance of my

regret at being unable to obey your request. As gentleman and pensioner of the royal academy of music, I cannot sing at the table of private persons without compromising myself. You will, I am sure, agree with me on reflection. In spite of my ardent desire to merit your patronage, I shall not quit my house but at the express desire of the king, who is my sovereign lord both as a noble and an actor. If his majesty wishes to hear me, as soon as I learn his pleasure I shall obey his mandate, happy to contribute to his pleasure and yours. "I am, &c. &c."

The duc d'Aiguillon was with me when I received this, and thought it exceedingly impertinent.

"I hope," he said, "that you will not give yourself any more trouble about this creature."

"Not so," I replied; "I will not be disappointed. The creature must come."

I sent for the duc de Vrillière, and desired him to write a *lettre de cachet* to Chassé, the actor, desiring him to hold himself in readiness to sing on the morrow at a supper which the king was to have at the comtesse du Barri's. This letter was carried to Chassé, who assured the bearer of his obedience.

He came next day; he was a fine old man, and as lively as a young abbé. He wore a splendid dress of red velvet, embroidered and ornamented with brass buttons; his wig was splendid; M. de Sartine's head was not more becomingly decorated. He sung, and I was delighted at his voice, still full, sustained, and melodious. The king listened to him with pleasure; and when he had concluded, asked him how old he was.

"Sire, I am seventy-six," was the reply.

"You are a prodigy! your voice has not altered in the least."

"Sire," replied the actor, with a tone and look of pride, "all my person is like my voice."

"I rejoice to hear it," replied the king; "I wish I could say as much."

The king did not make Chassé any present; these gracious words were his sole recompense. They would have been his only reward, had I not sent him a gold snuff-box in the name of the king. Notwithstanding, Louis XV. continued still ennuied, when one morning comte Jean came to me.

"Make yourself easy, sister," said he, "I have good news for you; I have found the damsel we want, and I have something for Frerat that will renew his appetite."

"Who is this new wonder?" I asked, with a disdainful air.

"A little creature, not so handsome as you, but very pretty."

"And when will she enter on her functions?"

"As soon as we please."

"Her name?"

"Ursule Noblin; she is very virtuous, but devotes herself to serve her brother, who is sentenced to death."

"What," I exclaimed, "would you present to his majesty the sister of a brigand?"

"The young man is not a robber: meeting with a man of some rank in the streets he would not give up the pavement to him, and received a blow, to which he replied by a blow of his cudgel, which knocked the other dead on the ground. You see it is a pardonable case; I have spoken to the father Noblin, and promised to save his son's life if he will resign his daughter to us. Young Ursule wept, but she loves her brother, considers the honour of her family, and has consented to follow me to the Parc aux Cerfs where I have left her."

In consequence of an intimation from comte Jean, Chamilly went to see this young lady, whom he found very handsome, and made her eulogiums to the king. Louis XV. went to the Parc, and was delighted with Ursule. It was not, however, without difficulty that he attained his desires, and he saw plainly that his victim was no voluntary sacrifice.

It was next necessary to rescue the unfortunate bro-

ther from the hands of justice. My brother-in-law took this upon himself; he desired Chon to speak to the chancellor: he, however, wishing to be urged, replied at first by a downright NO. Comte Jean enraged, went to M. de Maupeou; he reproached him indignantly with his lack of regard for what I desired. After some words on both sides, M. de Maupeou complained of having lost my good graces.

"Whose fault is that?" asked my brother-in-law.

"Mine, perhaps," replied M. de Maupeou; "perhaps hers. Prevail on her to listen to me, and we may probably come to terms; I can assure you that I am at all times her devoted servant."

"And her good relation," added comte Jean, spitefully; "but be that as it may, I will undertake to say that my sister shall listen to you, provided that you bring to her the pardon of Noblin in due form."

M. de Maupeou knew very well that if he refused me I should apply to the king; he had no desire to combat with me, but rather wished to regain my friendship: he sent me word, therefore, by my brother-in-law that he would wait upon me, and I awaited him with much impatience.

The good apostle arrived with an air half serious, half jesting. After two or three words of politeness he gave me the liberating parchment sealed with the state seal, and that in a manner so calm, as if it were the most indifferent thing in the world: he would, I believe, have brought me an order for execution with the same apathy. The main thing for him was an excuse for presenting himself to me. I received him with an air of dignity.

"My lovely cousin," said he, "will you frown at me all my life?"

"I, monseigneur!" was my reply; "I know too well the respect due to you."

"It is not to your respect I pretend, but your friendship, cousin; and I think I have some claims on that."

"Really," I replied, with a haughty tone, "I did not believe you cared about it."

"You mistake, madam; it is of the greatest consequence to me."

This frankness pleased me.

"Very well, sir," I added, "you allow then that my friendship is not altogether useless to you."

"So far from it, madam, that I have declared in all places, and at all times, the services you have rendered me. I am really at a loss to know the grounds of your anger."

"Must I tell you?" I replied, with vivacity; "it is because you have endeavoured to ruin me."

"I, madam!"

"So they tell me, sir."

"Those who told you so, lied; I am guilty—not towards you, but towards those who make use of you against me. I am guilty, because I do not think that the duc d'Aiguillon will ever make a good minister of war, and because I am decidedly of opinion that the abbé Terray will make a detestable chancellor."

"The abbé Terray chancellor! What do you mean?"

"In truth," said de Maupeou, "it is singular; but they are seeking to make it true. This man, the ruin of France, thinks, that to escape the gallies, he must hide himself beneath my robe. It is not mentioned to you in precise terms, but yet it is no less the fact; but I here swear to you, madam, that I will die in my duty. They cannot charge me with felony, and my only crime is in having too well served my king."

"Indeed, cousin, you tell me strange news."

"This is nothing," added the chancellor; "I will tell you more when you are fully reconciled to me; to-day I will not disclose another syllable. He who guides you means well, but he is deficient in brains; he is angry with me, because I advised him to be content with the *portfeuille* he already holds. May heaven preserve him even that. As to you, cousin, be assured that they who flatter you most are not those who love

you best; and if ever your fall should occur, it will be caused by those whom you least mistrust."

I begged the chancellor to explain; he refused, promising me, however, to tell me all at another interview, which I appointed for the next day.

I went myself to the Parc aux Cerfs with the pardon of Noblin, and gave her the important paper, which she pressed to her bosom with enthusiasm mingled with grief. "This favour has cost me dear," said she. "No matter; I would have bought it with my life's blood; my sin will be forgiven. I owed myself to my brother and my family, and now I am happy."

Here the poor girl wept; I endeavoured to console her, but in vain: I left her without having succeeded. At a subsequent period, when I inquired after her, I learnt she was dead. Oh, heaven! if my fears were founded. Shame will sometimes urge a virtuous heart to crime.

According to the arrangement the chancellor sent me word that he awaited me at my sister-in-law's, whither I hastened. Chon would have left us, but I said,

"No, sister, stay, if monseigneur has no objection."

"None at all," replied the chancellor. "Mademoiselle du Barri is devoted to you, and honours me with the title of friend; let her stay if you please. Besides, I shall not be sorry at the presence of a third party to impress on you the importance of the communication I am about to make to you."

"You rely on mademoiselle as an auxiliary."

"Ah, sister," said Chon, "if you have any such thought, I will remove instantly."

As a reply, I embraced my sister-in-law. We sat down on a sofa, and the chancellor, leaning on the chimney-piece, began by asking my opinion of the prince de Condé.

"Indeed," I replied, "this prince is a brave man in battle, but that is nothing with the name he bears. His conduct, however, latterly, has not raised him highly in my esteem. I think he has more talent

than frankness, and more egotism than disinterestedness."

"Well, madam, and your opinion of the comte de la Marche?"

"As to him, his friendship has cost me dear; but, in general, friendship is not cheap at court. He is amiable in a drawing-room, I know not what he would be at the head of affairs."

"Wonderful! And the prince de Soubise?"

"Oh, as to him, heaven in forming him only forgot to give him brains and heart; except these, he is perfection. But tell me, M. de Maupeou, are you going to catechize me upon all the courtiers?"

"No, madam, I only wished for your opinion on these three personages. Learn that, thanks to the pains of the princesse de Marsan, they have united to drive out the real minister, to drive you from court, and to put in your place a woman on whom they can depend."

"What!" I exclaimed, with more astonishment than anger, "has the comte de la Marche, who is wholly devoted to me, joined in this plot?"

"Ah, my dear cousin," replied the chancellor, "you are always the same; for ever for or against, this way or that, without reason or motive. Believe me, the comte de la Marche is no better than others. If he has been faithful to you for any time, it is because it has not been his interest to betray you; now he sees a chance of profit, and does not hesitate to range himself under the enemy's banner."

"What a villainous country, and what villainous people!" I exclaimed; "but before I become angry I wish to be convinced of what you assert. Have you any proof, or is it but simple conjecture?"

"Madam," replied the chancellor, taking out a paper, "I have a proof; behold it: it is a letter which the comte de la Marche wrote to the prince de Soubise, and which he left at little Cleophile's, who gave it to me."

"Ah, cousin!" said I, "you complain of the demo-

ralization of the court, you groan over the passions which reign there, and yet you gallantly pay attentions to the mistress of another man. Poor sister," I added, embracing Chon, " men are monsters."

" You are mistaken," replied the chancellor; " it is not I who am on terms with Cleophile, but one of my people, who has influence with her; one of my secretaries, a good-looking fellow, named Delbose, who allies diplomacy and love very well, and whilst he transacts his own affairs is careful of ours. Such a service deserves a recompense; and when a member of my parliament is suspended I shall give his post to Delbose, who deserves it."

We all three laughed: but enough for to-day. Although it is ridiculous to stop in the midst of a scene I can write no longer. You shall have the rest to-morrow.

CHAPTER XIV.

The comte de la Marche's letter—The chancellor and the countess—The king and the duc d'Aiguillon—The countess and the king—Vengeance—Prince Louis—His follies—Conversation thereon—Love and diplomacy.

THE chancellor gave me the comte de la Marche's letter, which he begged me to read aloud. It ran thus:—

"MONSIEUR LE MARECHAL,—My cousin has communicated to me your conversation with him, and the hopes that you will form together a better government. I see plainly that all goes badly, and know as well as yourself the reason of it. It is first the incapacity of the ministry, then the destruction of the courts of

magistracy, and finally, the affection of the king for a person who supports a dangerous triumvirate.

"My cousin has informed me, that you proposed to him to oppose our triumvirate to that which now exists. I think that may be easily done: our intentions are better than theirs; we seek the king's interests, the advantage of the people, the triumph of justice, and the restoration of good manners. I think success is certain if we understand each other, and know how to conform ourselves to it. I think it is necessary to induce the king to form a new administration, at the head of which should be ourselves and your son-in-law: for we do not aim at being called ministers.

"I would propose to you, as comptroller-general, M. Cromat; he is an able financier, and has excellent plans; moreover, he offers us a comfortable sum each to be paid in the first year of his assuming office. This proposal is worthy of consideration, for you have debts, my cousin ditto, and the list of mine is atrociously fearful! He has said, that he would not forget madame de Monaco, nor mademoiselle Guimard, nor the others. I repeat, that M. Cromat is the man for us.

"As your son-in-law says that it is right that we should each have a pledge from the other, I write to you: I hope you will reply as early as possible. As to my friendship for the countess do not be uneasy; I know all that is due to this lady consistent with my duties as a prince and a citizen. The point essential is to move her from her vantage ground; and on this head I can give you some useful hints.

"Remaining, &c. &c."

As I advanced with this letter my voice became changed. The perfidy of the comte de la Marche was death to me; I preferred him to the princes de Soubise and de Condé. I remembered his base flatteries and cajoleries; epithets of the most vituperative kind escaped my lips one after the other, the spontaneous production of my rage. My sister-in-law was no less indignant than myself. As for the chancellor, he looked

at us in turns with a cool glance, whilst a smile of contempt played on his pallid lips. At last he said to me,

"Do you believe now that I am more your enemy than the author of this letter?"

"I do believe it," I replied, "although I am in no mood to believe anybody."

"Is it not true, sister," said Chon, "that M. de Maupeou behaves with the greatest frankness, and that it would be unjust to refuse him your confidence?"

"Hold, sister," I replied; "I know not where I am; they will deprive me of my senses. I am compelled to be perpetually on my guard, always on the *qui vive,* always in fear of my enemies, and still more so of my friends. I thought I could trust the comte de la Marche as well as myself, and yet he behaves to me in a most unworthy manner. Ah, my worthy gentleman, you would supplant me! but the king shall hear of it, and we will see who shall be masters."

During this apostrophe, which would have done credit to the most vehement orator, the chancellor remained immovable and taciturn.

"In truth," said I to him, "you are the god of evil; you bring only boils and blains. You are yet content, are you not, to see me in a broil with de la Marche?"

"I should be better pleased to be reconciled with you," was the reply.

"I have a great mind," I continued, "to continue my enmity with you, but I am compelled to confess, that in working for your own interests you have served mine."

"Wonderful!" said M. de Maupeou. "Let us cease to be at cross purposes; my advice will be useful to you."

"Why do you not run with d'Aiguillon?"

"Because he runs to his ruin; and because, according to our agreement, I must leave the ministry when he does. I save myself in saving him."

"But what will he say to our reconciliation? He will scold me."

"Well," replied de Maupeou, "do not tell him of it; let him think that we are irreconcilable enemies."

And so saying, the gallant chancellor took my hand and kissed it.

The duc d'Aiguillon had heard of the plot of these princes. He was fully persuaded that M. de Maupeou guided these persons privately: he attempted to speak against them to the king, and was cut short at his first sentence. "Duc d'Aiguillon," said the king, "I am sorry that a good understanding no longer subsists between yourself and M. de Maupeou; but, to prevent all attempts you may make against him, I warn you, that I consider his services as highly as yours. He has made me king of France; to the present time my predecessors and I were only the humble servants of the parliaments; he has destroyed them as cardinal de Richelieu destroyed the lords of the feudality. My posterity will own no less to the chancellor than they did to the cardinal; and, in fact, so long as I am king, so long will M. de Maupeou be chancellor."

The duc d'Aiguillon endeavoured in vain to disguise the secret chagrin which these words of the king caused. He would fain have answered but could not, and therefore took his leave.

When we were alone the king said to me,

"I know not how to account for this difference between him and the chancellor; I like him, and so does every one else. Those who formerly ranged with him against the parliaments are now opposed to him; the duc and the abbé Terray seem to pull together."

"True, sire," I replied, "I know as well as you do the people you mention."

"What do you know of them?" said Louis XV., turning red, "I named no one."

"Oh, you need not name them; I have my police, and am instructed as well as your majesty with all that passes."

"Really!"

"Certainly."

"Well, then, whom do you suspect?"

"De Soubise, de Condé, and de la Marche. Am I wrong?" The king was silent. "Yes, sire, these three gentlemen would fain become the regency of this realm."

"Is it possible?" said Louis XV.

"It is true," I replied; "and if you do not believe me, look, sire; read this letter from the comte de la Marche to the prince de Soubise."

The king took the letter and read it, and I took it from him as he said,

"I only see in this a natural desire to serve me; a laudable ambition; the letter is written in good terms. The only thing amiss is the improper reference to you, whom they ought to respect for my sake; otherwise I see nothing to complain of."

"This is very fine," said I; "I know now how far I may depend upon your protection; you would see me torn to pieces before you would interfere, so that your own personal safety was not compromised; however, be satisfied, I will defend myself without your assistance; and henceforward I will never quit my chamber without a brace of pistols in my belt."

"Come, come," replied Louis XV., "you look upon things in a wrong light. Can you suppose that I would suffer you to be attacked with impunity?"

"How do I know? you are so compassionate, that you fear to hurt even those who are ready to murder me."

"Be assured," answered the king, "that I will defend you with my life. My ministers must take care of themselves; their safety is their own business and not mine."

The last remark was unanswerable, and I was silent.

I next sent to request madame de Valentinois would come to me immediately; and, in a long *tête à tête*, I explained to her my reasons for being dissatisfied with the prince de Condé, requesting, at the same time, she would come to an explanation with her sister-in-law,

madame de Monaco. I charged her further, to apprize this lady, that if she continued to give me cause for displeasure I should embrace every opportunity of creating a misunderstanding between his majesty and the prince; that I should infallibly succeed in so doing, and in that case, the prince would find himself most disagreeably situated between the public, who would repulse his advances, and the court, who refused to acknowledge him. Madame de Valentinois repaired to her sister-in-law, and repeated what I had said. This lady, trifling and thoughtless as was her general character, clearly perceived the justness of my remarks: she saw all the danger of offending me, when, at a word, I could dry up the source from whence the pensions, in which she so largely participated, arose; besides, when she learned that the commencement of the intrigue was to be supplying the king with a new mistress, she refused to have anything at all to do with it. She knew me well, and could speak more positively than any person to the generosity of my disposition; whilst, on the other hand, she could by no means feel equally assured of meeting with equal liberality in my successor. Another motive operated in my favour: she entertained a great dislike for M. de Soubise, the father-in-law of her lover, and she particularly dreaded seeing them drawn together in fresh intimacy. In pursuance of all these reflections she managed so well, as to divert the prince de Condé by degrees from the prosecution of his plan, till at length he wholly forgot it.

As for the comte de la Marche, I avenged myself for his perfidious conduct, by the marked contempt with which I treated him whenever I by chance encountered him; nor did M. de Soubise meet with more lenient treatment. I took particular delight in annoying him upon all occasions; sometimes by various tricks well played off against him, and sometimes by smart observations and pointed remarks upon various passages of his private life; but the most decided proof of my

ill-will towards him was shown in seeking, by every means, to injure prince Louis de Rohan.

The empress Marie Thérèse could no longer endure our ambassador at her court; every day produced fresh follies on the part of the prince, or extravagances committed in his name. To such a length did things go that at last Marie Thérèse herself wrote to Louis XV., requesting of him to recall his ambassador. The king knew not what to do; between his dread of offending the empress, and his almost equal apprehension of drawing upon himself the enmity of the princesse de Marsan and the long train of the Rohan family, an affair by no means of a trifling nature. One day that he was telling me of the disagreeable dilemma in which he found himself, adding, that he was the most unfortunate of men, I interrupted him, by expressing my surprise at his finding any difficulty in acceding to the wishes of the empress.

"Truly," cried Louis XV., in a piteous tone, "you settle all this very easily; but how am I to make up my mind to bear from morning till night the complaints of madame de Marsan and the remonstrances of de Soubise?"

"Oh, as for this latter," replied I, "you can easily get rid of him; pay him well, and he will willingly sell you his consent to the recall of prince Louis; he will ask an exorbitant price, no doubt, but still he will agree to the measure, and take your gold willingly."

"I fear," returned Louis XV., "it will not be quite so easy to arrange the affair as you seem to think."

"And so you will run the risk of offending both the empress and dauphiness. Marie Thérèse has the privilege of receiving at her court only those persons who please her; and since your ambassador is disagreeable to her——"

"The devil take my ambassador," ejaculated Louis XV., in a rage. "The fool! the idiot! over head and ears as he is in debt, to go running into fresh extravagances and follies; but whose fault is it he ever went

upon the embassy? Why, the duc d'Aiguillon's, the chancellor's, yours, madam; for you it was who put it into my head to send such a shatter brain, where at least I ought to have sent a man possessed of common sense. No; he is there now, let him stop there."

All my arguments were in vain, and those of the dauphiness met with no better success. However love, to whose power even diplomatists must yield, settled the affair its own way; that is to say, very foolishly, as you shall hear. The comte de Mercy Argentan, ambassador from the Austrian court, had a most lovely creature, named Fanny Layer, for his mistress; a female, who united sufficient charms to have turned the heads of every ambassador in Europe: her present lover was, as may be imagined, passionately fond of her. The princesse de Marsan was aware of the fact, and caused prince Louis to write her a letter, in which he said he was impatient to be again her slave; that he found he could no longer live without her; and that, if the king did not speedily recall him, he should himself demand his dismissal from office. This epistle, as may be easily supposed, found its way to the hands of comte de Mercy, who, forgetful of the instructions of his royal mistress, exerted every effort to prevent the return of his formidable rival to Paris. So well did he temporize and delay the affair, that prince Louis only returned to France two months after the accession of Louis XVI. to the throne. After this, will you not say how dangerous it must ever be to intrust the interests of a kingdom to love-sick ambassadors.

CHAPTER XV.

Visit from a stranger—Madame de Pompadour and a jacobinical monk—Continuation of this history—Deliverance of a state prisoner—A meeting with the stranger.

One day, at an hour at which I was not accustomed to see any person, a lady called and requested to see me; she was informed that I was visible to no person. No matter, she persisted in her request, saying that she had to speak to me upon matters of the first importance, and declared, that I should be delighted with her visit. However, my servants, accustomed to the artifices practised by persons wishing to see me for interested purposes, heeded very little the continued protestations of my strange applicant, and peremptorily refused to admit her; upon which the unknown retired with the indication of extreme anger.

Two hours afterwards a note, bearing no signature, was brought me, in which the late scene was described to me, and I was further informed, that the lady, so abruptly repulsed by my servants, had presented herself to communicate things which concerned not only my own personal safety but the welfare of all France; a frightful catastrophe was impending, which there was still time to prevent; the means of so doing were offered me, and I was conjured not to reject them. The affair, if treated with indifference, would bring on incalculable misfortunes and horrors, to which I should be the first victim. All this apparent mystery would be cleared up, and the whole affair explained, if I would repair on the following day, at one o'clock, to the Baths of Apollo. A grove of trees there was pointed

out as a safe place of rendezvous, and being so very near my residence, calculated to remove any fears I might entertain of meeting a stranger, who, as the note informed me, possessed the means of entering this secluded spot. I was again conjured to be punctual to the appointed hour as I valued my life.

The mysterious and solemn tone of this singular epistle struck me with terror. Madame de Mirepoix was with me at the moment I received it. This lady had a peculiar skill in physiognomy, and the close attention she always paid to mine was frequently extremely embarrassing and disagreeable. She seemed (as usual) on the present occasion to read all that was passing in my mind; however, less penetrating eyes than hers might easily have perceived, by my sudden agitation, that the paper I held in my hand contained something more than usual.

"What ails you?" asked she, with the familiarity our close intimacy warranted; "does that note bring you any bad news?"

"No," said I; "it tells me nothing; but it leaves me ample room for much uneasiness and alarm: but, after all, it may be merely some hoax, some foolish jest played off at my expense; but judge for yourself." So saying, I handed her the letter: when she had perused it, she said,

"Upon my word, if I were in your place, I would clear up this mystery; good advice is not so easily met with as to make it a matter of difficulty to go as far as the Baths of Apollo to seek it. It is by no means impossible but that, as this paper tells you, some great peril is hanging over you. The marquise de Pompadour," continued madame de Mirepoix, "received more than once invitations similar to this, which she never failed to attend; and I recollect one circumstance, in which she had no cause to regret having done so; without the kind offices of one of these anonymous writers it is very possible that she might have expired heart broken, and perhaps forsaken in some

state prison, instead of ending her days in the château of Versailles, honoured even to the tomb by the friendship and regard of the king of France."

I asked my friend to explain her last observation, and she replied as follows :—

" One day an anonymous billet, similar to this, was left for madame de Pompadour: it requested her to repair, at a specified hour, to the church of the Jacobins, rue Saint Honoré, in Paris, where she was promised some highly important communications. The marchioness was punctual to the rendezvous; and, as she entered the church, a jacobite, so entirely wrapped in his capuchin as to conceal his features, approached her, took her by the hand, and conducted her to an obscure chapel; where, requesting her to sit down, he took a seat himself, and began as follows:—' Madam, you are about to lose the favour of the king; a party is at work to give a new mistress to the king; the lady is young, beautiful, witty, and possessed of an insatiable ambition; for the last six months she has been in the daily habit of seeing the king, unknown to you and all the court, and this has been accomplished in the following manner: her father is valet de chambre to his majesty, and she has an only brother, two years younger than herself, whose astonishing resemblance to her has created continual mistakes; this brother is promised the inheritance of his father's office; and, under pretext of acquiring the due initiation for his future post, has been permitted every morning to attend the king's rising. However, this embryo page is the sister, who comes each morning disguised in her brother's clothes. The king has had many private conversations with the designing beauty; and, seduced by her many charms of mind and person, as well as dazzled by the hidden and concealed nature of their intrigue, finds his passion for her increase from day to day. Many are the designing persons ready to profit by the transfer of the king's affections from you to this fresh favourite; and they flatter themselves the desired event is close at hand;

You are to be confined by a *lettre de cachet* to the isles of St. Margaret, for the place of your exile is already chosen. The principal conspirators are two powerful noblemen, one of whom is reputed your most intimate friend. I learned all these particulars,' continued the jacobite, 'from a young penitent, but not under the seal of confession. This penitent is the particular friend of the female in question, who confided the secret to her, from whom I received it, accompanied by the most flattering promises of future protection and advancement. These splendid prospects excited her jealous envy, and she came here to confess the whole to me, requesting I would seek you out and inform you of the whole affair. Here is a letter she obtained unknown to her aspiring friend, which she wishes you to see, as a pledge of the veracity of her statement.' The marchioness cast her eyes over the paper held out to her by the jacobite. It was a letter addressed by the king to his new mistress.

"You may imagine the terror of madame de Pompadour, her anxiety and impatience to return to Versailles. However, ere she quitted the friendly monk she assured him of her lasting gratitude, and begged of him to point out how she could best prove it. 'For myself,' replied he, 'I ask nothing; but if you would render me your debtor, confer the first vacant bishopric on a man whom I greatly esteem, the abbé de Barral.' You will easily suppose that the abbé de Barral had not long to wait for his preferment: as for the jacobite the marchioness never again saw or heard any thing of him. She mentioned him to the newly appointed bishop, who could not even understand to what she alluded. She related the affair, when he called heaven to witness that he knew nothing of any jacobite either directly or indirectly."

"And how did the marchioness get rid of her rival?" inquired I of madame de Mirepoix.

"By a very simple and effective expedient. She sent for the duc de Saint Florentin, whom she requested

immediately to expedite two *lettres de cachet;* one for the valet de chambre, who was shut up in the château de Lectoure, and the other for the daughter, whom the marchioness sent to Sainte Marguerite, to occupy the place she had so obligingly destined for herself."

"And how," asked I, "did these unfortunate people ever get out of prison?"

"That I know not," answered the maréchale; "and, God forgive me, for aught I ever inquired they may be there now."

"If so," cried I, "the conduct of both the king and the duc de la Vrillière is abominable and unpardonable."

"Why, bless your heart, my dear," exclaimed the maréchale, "do you expect that his majesty should recollect all the pretty women he has intrigued with, any more than the poor duke can be expected to keep a list in his memory of the different persons he has sent to a prison? He would require a prodigious recollection for such a purpose."

This unfeeling reply filled me with indignation, and redoubled the pity I already felt for the poor prisoners. I immediately despatched a note to the duc de Saint Florentin, requesting he would come to me without delay: he hastened to obey my summons. When he had heard my recital he remained silent some minutes, as though collecting his recollections upon the subject, and then replied,

"I do indeed remember that some obscure female was confined in the château of the isle Sainte Marguerite at the request of madame de Pompadour, but I cannot now say, whether at the death of the marchioness any person thought of interceding for her release."

"That is precisely what I wish to ascertain," cried I; "return to your offices, monsieur le duc, and use your best endeavours to discover whether this unfortunate girl and her parent are still in confinement; nor venture again in my presence until you have despatched

the order for their deliverance: you will procure a conveyance for them from their prison to Paris at the expense of government. You understand, my lord?"

The following morning the duke brought me the desired information. He told me, that the father had been dead seven years, but the daughter still remained a prisoner: the order for restoring her to liberty had been forwarded the night preceding. I will now briefly relate the end of this mournful story.

Three weeks after this I received an early visit from the duc de la Vrillière, who came to apprize me, that my protégée from the isle Sainte Marguerite was in my antechamber awaiting permission to offer me her grateful thanks. I desired she might instantly be admitted: her appearance shocked me; not a single trace of that beauty which had proved so fatal to its possessor now remained. She was pale, emaciated, and her countenance, on which care and confinement had imprinted the wrinkles of premature old age, was sad and dejected even to idiocy. I could have wished that madame de Pompadour, by way of punishment for her cruelty, could but have seen the object of her relentless persecution, I think she would have blushed for herself. When the poor girl entered my apartment she looked wildly around her, and casting herself at my feet, inquired with many tears to what motive she was indebted for my generous interference in her behalf. The duc de la Vrillière contemplated with the utmost *sang froid* the spectacle of a misery he had so largely contributed to. I requested of him to leave us to ourselves. I then raised my weeping protégée, consoled her to the best of my ability, and then requested her to give me the history of her captivity. Her story was soon told: she had been an inhabitant of the same prison for seventeen years and five months, without either seeing a human being, or hearing the sound of a human voice. Her recital made me shudder, and I promised her that henceforward her life should be rendered as happy as it had hitherto been miserable.

The king supped with me that evening. By some singular chance he was on this occasion in the happiest temper possible: he laughed, sung, joked with such unusual spirits, that I hesitated ere I disturbed a gaiety to which Louis XV. was so little prone. However, I took him aside, saying, "Sire, I have to ask atonement and reparation for a most horrible piece of injustice." After which, I proceeded to acquaint him with the distressing history of his unfortunate mistress. He appeared perfectly well to recollect the female to whom I alluded; and when I ceased speaking, he said, with a half-suppressed sigh,

"Poor creature! she has indeed been unfortunate; seventeen years and five months in prison! The duc de la Vrillière is greatly to blame in the affair; but when once he has placed persons between four walls, he thinks he has fulfilled the whole of his duty. He should recollect, that a good memory is a necessary qualification for the situation he holds; it is indeed an imperative duty in him to think of the poor wretches he deprives of their liberty."

"And in you too, sire," interrupted I; "and it appears to me that you have lost sight of it, in the present affair, as culpably as your minister."

"I confess it, indeed," answered Louis XV.; "but the unfortunate sufferer herself was not without a due share of blame in the matter. Her presumption had greatly irritated madame de Pompadour, who punished her as she thought fit: of course I could not, consistently with the regard I professed for the marchioness, interfere in the execution of her vengeance."

"And your majesty's regard for madame de Pompadour enabled you to sacrifice all her rivals to her?"

"Why, what else could I do?" asked Louis XV., with the most imperturbable calmness; "she had superior claims, was acknowledged as chief favourite, and I could not refuse her the sacrifice of a mere temporary caprice."

"Very well said," answered I, "and founded upon

excellent principles; but surely it was not necessary to shut up the object of your caprice in a state prison, and, above all, to leave her there for such a length of time. However, the mischief is done; and all we have to think of is to repair it. You have now, sire, a fine opportunity of displaying your royal munificence."

"You think, then," returned Louis XV., "that I am bound to make this unhappy girl some present? Well, I will; to-morrow I will send her 1000 louis."

"A thousand louis!" exclaimed I, clasping my hands; "what, as a recompense for seventeen years' imprisonment? No, no, sire, you shall not get off so easily; you must settle on her a pension of 12,000 livres, and present her with an order for 100,000 more as an immediate supply."

"Bless me!" ejaculated the king, "why all the girls in my kingdom would go to prison for such a dowry: however, she shall have the pension; but, in truth, my treasury is exhausted."

"Then, sire," returned I, "borrow of your friends."

"Come, come, let us finish this business; I will give your protégée 4000 louis."

"No, I cannot agree," answered I, "to less than 5000."

The king promised me I should have them; and, on the following day, his valet Turpigny brought me the order for the pension, and a bag, in which I found only 4000 louis. This piece of meanness did not surprise me, but it made me shrug up my shoulders, and sent me to my cabinet to take the sum deficient from my own funds. With this dowry my poor protégée soon found a suitable husband in the person of one of her cousins, for whom I procured a lucrative post under government. These worthy people have since well repaid me by their grateful and devoted attachment for the service I was enabled to render them. One individual of their family was, however, far from resembling them either in goodness of heart or generosity

of sentiment—I allude to the brother of the lady; that same brother who formerly supplied his sister with his clothes, that she might visit the king unsuspected. Upon the incarceration of the father the son succeeded him in his office of valet de chambre, and acquired considerable credit at court; yet, although in the daily habit of seeing the king, he neither by word nor deed sought to obtain the deliverance of either his parent or sister. On the contrary, he suffered the former to perish in a dungeon, and allowed the latter to languish in one during more than seventeen years, and in all probability she would have ended her days without receiving the slightest mark of his recollection of his unfortunate relative. I know no trait of base selfishness more truly revolting than the one I have just related.

But this story has led me far from the subject I was previously commencing: this narrative, which I never call to mind without a feeling of pleasure, has led me away in spite of myself. Still I trust that my narrative has been sufficiently interesting to induce you to pardon the digression it has occasioned, and in the next chapter I will resume the thread of my discourse.

CHAPTER XVI.

A conspiracy—A scheme for poisoning madame du Barri—The four bottles—Letter to the duc d'Aiguillon—Advice of the ministers—Opinion of the physicians—The chancellor and lieutenant of police—Resolution of the council.

Have you any curiosity to learn the dénouement of the story I was telling you of my anonymous correspondent? Read what follows then, and your wishes shall be

gratified; that is, if you have patience to hear a rather long story; for I cannot promise you that mine will very speedily be completed. Let me see; where did I leave off? Oh, I recollect.

I was telling you that madame de Mirepoix urged me to repair, as I was requested, to the Baths of Apollo. I had a key which opened all the park gates; we entered the park, took the path which turns off to the left, and after having walked for about five minutes, found ourselves opposite the person we were in search of. It was a female of from thirty to forty years of age, of diminutive stature, dressed after the fashion of the bourgeoises of the day, but still an air of good taste was evident through the simplicity of her attire. Her countenance must once have been handsome, if one might judge by the beauty of her eyes and mouth, but she was pale, withered, and already impressed with the traces of a premature old age. But her beauties, although faded, were still animated by a quick and ever-varying expression of a keen and lively wit.

Whilst I made these hasty remarks the stranger saluted me, and afterwards the maréchale de Mirepoix, with an ease of manner which perfectly surprised me. Nor did she in any other instance betray the embarrassment of a person who finds herself for the first time in the presence of persons of a rank superior to her own.

"Madam," she said, addressing herself to me, "I trust you will pardon me for having given you the trouble of coming hither; I might have spared it you, had your people permitted me to see you when I called at your house yesterday."

"Your invitation," replied I, "was so pressingly enforced, that I confess my curiosity has been most keenly awakened."

"I will immediately satisfy it," answered she, "but what I have to say must be told to yourself alone."

"Well, then," said the maréchale, "I will leave you for the present; I am going to admire that fine group

of Girardon;" and so saying, she quitted the walk in which I was standing.

Directly she was gone the stranger said to me, "Madam, I will explain myself without reserve or unnecessary prolixity; I beseech of you to listen attentively whilst I tell you, in the first place, that both your life and that of the king is in imminent danger."

"Heavens!" cried I, "what do I hear?"

"That which I well know to be true," answered the female, with a firm voice; "I repeat that your life and that of the king is in danger."

These words, pronounced in a low, solemn voice, froze me with terror; my limbs tottered under me, and I almost sunk on the ground. The stranger assisted me to a bench, offered me her arm, and when she saw me a little recovered she continued,

"Yes, madam, a conspiracy is afoot against yourself and Louis XV. You are to be made away with out of revenge, and Louis XV. is to suffer, in the hopes of his death effecting a change in the present face of affairs."

"And who," inquired I, "are the conspirators?"

"The jesuits and parliamentarians; these ancient rivals, equally persecuted by the royal government, have determined to make common cause against their mutual foe. The jesuits flatter themselves that the dauphin inherits the kind feelings entertained by his father for their order, and the parliamentarians justly reckon upon the friendly disposition of the young prince towards the old magistracy. Both parties equally flatter themselves that a fresh reign would bring about their reestablishment, and they are impatient to accelerate so desirable an event: the conspiracy is directed by four jesuits and the same number of the ex-members of the parliament of Paris. The remainder of the two corporations are not initiated in the secret of the enterprise. I am not able at present to give you the names of the eight conspirators, the person from whom I derive my information not having as yet con-

fided them even to myself, but I trust ere long to obtain such a mark of confidence."

The female ceased speaking, and I remained in a state of doubt, fear, and alarm, impossible to describe. Still one thing appeared clear to me, that information so mysteriously conveyed was not deserving of belief, unless supported by more corroborating testimony. My unknown friend evidently divined all that was passing in my mind, for she observed,

"I perceive that my recital appears to you improbable; one particular which I will state may perhaps overcome your incredulity. Are you not in the habit, madam, of taking every evening eau sucrée mixed with a large proportion of orange-flower water?"

"I am so," replied I.

"This day," continued my informant, "you will receive four bottles of orange-flower water contained in a box, bearing the usual appearances of having come from your perfumer's, but it is sent by other hands, and the liquor contained in the flasks is mingled with a deadly poison."

These last words made me tremble. "You must complete your kind offices," cried I to my visitor, "by bringing me acquainted with the person from whom you have derived your intelligence: that individual must be acquainted with the whole of the plot; and, believe me, I will not be unmindful of either of you."

"Stay one instant," replied the lady, without evincing the slightest emotion; "the man who was my informant is assuredly aware of the names of those concerned in the conspiracy, but he has charged me not to state who he is but upon certain conditions; a recommendation I shall most certainly attend to."

"Be assured," interrupted I, "that your demands shall be acceded to; you shall yourself fix the price of your entire disclosure of every fact connected with the business."

"It will not be an exorbitant one," replied the lady; "merely 2000 crowns, to be equally divided between

the friend you desire to know and myself; for this sum, which is not a very large one, you may command the services of both of us. One word more, madam, and I am gone. Observe a strict silence upon all I have told you; or, if you must have a counsellor in such perilous circumstances, confide merely in some tried friend; say the duc d'Aiguillon or the chancellor, or both should you deem it necessary; but have a care how you admit a third to a participation of the affair; you could scarcely select another person without choosing one already corrupted by your enemies. It is said that they are in correspondence with even those persons immediately about the person of the king. Adieu, madam; I will see you at your own apartments the day after to-morrow, when I trust you will have ready 100,000 francs, on account of the 600,000 I have stipulated for."

So saying, she curtsied and left me, overcome with surprise. A thousand fearful ideas pressed upon my brain, and my heart sickened at the long train of gloomy images which presented themselves. I had had sufficient proofs since my elevation of the deadly hatred borne me by those whom my good fortune had rendered my enemies: yet, hitherto, my strongest apprehensions had never been directed to any thing more terrible than being supplanted in the favour of the king, or being confined in my château du Luciennes. The horrible ideas of murder, poison, or assassination by any means, had never presented themselves to me. All at once I recollected the young man in the garden of the Tuilleries: his predictions of my future greatness had been accomplished. He had also announced to me fearful vicissitudes, and had threatened to appear to me when these catastrophes were about to occur. Doubtless he would keep his word; now was the time for so doing, and I timidly glanced around as I caught the sound of a slight rustle among the branches, fully expecting to see my young prophet; but the figure which met my eye was that of madame de Mirepoix, who, tired of waiting, had come to rejoin me.

"What!" said she, "are you alone? I did not observe your visitor leave you. Did she vanish into air?"

"Very possibly," answered I.

"So then," replied the maréchale, "she proved a fairy, or some beneficent genie, after all?"

"If she were a spirit," said I, "it certainly was not to the better sort she belonged."

"Have a care," cried the maréchale; "I have already formed a thousand conjectures as to what this woman has been telling."

"And all your suppositions," replied I, "would fall short of the reality. Listen, my dear maréchale," added I, rising, and taking her arm to proceed homewards, "I have been strictly prohibited from admitting any counsellor but the duc d'Aiguillon and the chancellor; still I can have no reserves with you, who I know, from the regard you bear both to the king and myself, will advise me to the best of your power."

As we walked towards the château, I explained to my companion the joint conspiracy of the jesuits and ancient members of parliament against the king's life and my own. When I had ceased speaking, she replied, "All this is very possible; despair may conduct the jesuits and parliamentarians to the greatest extremities; but still this mysterious female may be nothing more than an impostor. At any rate, I am anxious to learn whether the box she described has been left at your house; if so, it will be a strong corroboration, if not a convincing proof of the falsehood of what she asserts."

We had by this time reached the bottom of the staircase which conducted to my apartments; we ascended the stairs rapidly, and the first person I met in the anteroom was Henriette.

"Henriette," said I, "has any thing been brought for me during my absence?"

"Nothing, except a box of orange-flower water from Michel, the perfumer's, which I presume you ordered, madam."

A glance of mutual surprise and consternation passed between the maréchale and myself. We entered my chamber, where madame de Mirepoix opened the fatal box; it contained the four bottles exactly as had been described. We regarded each other in profound silence, not daring to communicate our reflections. However, it was requisite to take some steps, and, catching up a pen, I hastily wrote the following billet to the duc d'Aiguillon:—

"MONSIEUR LE DUC,—Whatever may be the affairs with which you are at present occupied, I pray of you to throw them aside, and hasten to me instantly upon receipt of this. Nothing can equal in importance the subject upon which I wish to see you; I cannot now explain myself fully, but prepare for news of the most horrible description, and it refers to the safety and preservation of the most valuable life in the kingdom. I cannot delay time by writing more; I can only beseech of you not to lose one moment in obeying this summons. Adieu; fail not to come and bring me back this note."

The duke hastened to me full of terror and alarm.

"Your letter has really frightened me," said he; "what can be the matter? Surely the life of his majesty is not in danger?"

"Too truly is it," anwered I; "but sit down, and you shall know all the affair. The maréchale is already aware of the matter and need not withdraw."

The duke listened with extreme attention to the recital of my interview in the grove surrounding the Baths of Apollo, as well as to the account of the discourse I had held there with the strange female. I endeavoured to relate the conversation as minutely and accurately as possible, but still the duke sought further particulars. He inquired the style of countenance, dress, manner, and tone of voice possessed by the incognita. One might have supposed, by the closeness of his questions, that he already fancied he had identified this mysterious personage: he then examined the

box, which stood on the table, and remarked, "This is a very serious affair, nor can I undertake the management of it alone; it involves a too great responsibility. Spite of the lady's assertions, I am confident the fullest confidence might be placed in all the ministers. However, I will first have a conference with M. de Saint Florentin and the chancellor, in whose presence I will send for the lieutenant of police; and the contents of these bottles shall be immediately analyzed."

The duke, without quitting me, wrote immediately to his two colleagues as well as to M. de Sartines, requesting this latter to repair to my apartment without delay. One of the ministers summoned by M. d'Aiguillon was not at that moment at Versailles, having left at an early hour in the morning for Paris. Neither he nor M de Sartines could possibly be with us before eight o'clock in the evening; it was therefore agreed to adjourn our conference till their arrival. Meanwhile M. d'Aiguillon, the maréchale, and myself, remained in a state of the most cruel anxiety. The duke first blamed me for not having caused the woman to be arrested, and afterwards he confessed to the maréchale, that perhaps it was better the conspiracy should be allowed time to ripen into maturity. During this time the liquid contained in the four bottles was being decomposed: M. Quesnay, first physician, Messrs. Thiébault and Varennes, visiting physicians, M. de la Martinière, counsellor of state, surgeon to his majesty, as well as Messrs. Ducor and Prost, apothecaries to his majesty, had been collected together for this purpose by the duc d'Aiguillon.

These gentlemen came to report the termination of their experiments at the very moment when the chancellor and lieutenant of police entered the room; the duc de la Vrillière had preceded them by about five minutes: the duc d'Aiguillon requested these gentlemen to be seated. The doctors Quesnay and la Martinière were introduced, and desired to make known the result of their operations. My newly-arrived guests, who as

yet understood nothing of what was going on, were struck with astonishment at hearing it said, that the four bottles of orange-flower water contained a considerable proportion of a most active poison, of which a very few drops would be sufficient to cause instantaneous death. Having thus executed their commission, the medical gentlemen bowed and retired.

M. d'Aiguillon then explained to my wondering friends the horrible affair which had occasioned their being sent for so hastily. I cannot tell you what effect this disclosure produced on M. de la Vrillière or M. de Maupeou, my whole attention being fixed upon M. de Sartines. You may suppose that a lieutenant of police, particularly one who piqued himself upon knowing every thing, could not feel very much at his ease, when each word that was uttered convicted him either of incapacity or negligence. His brow became contracted, he hemmed, choked, fidgetted about, and appeared as though he would have given every thing in the world for liberty to justify himself, but etiquette forbade it, and he was only permitted to speak after the secretaries of state then present, or if called upon by either of them.

When M. d'Aiguillon had ceased speaking, the chancellor in his turn took up the conversation. M. de Maupeou was by nature cold and sarcastic, delighting in annoying any person ; but, on the present occasion, the ill-nature inherent in him was still excited by the decided hatred he bore to the unfortunate M. de Sartines. He began by saying, that the conspiracy was evident, and was easily explained by the state of exasperation in which the jesuits and parliamentarians now were; both orders looking for no other prospect of amendment in their condition than such as might arise from some sudden convulsion of the kingdom. He expressed his opinion of the necessity of instituting a rigorous inquiry into the conduct of these two bodies; and then, turning to M. de Sartines, whose cheek grew pale at the movement, he

charged him to lay before the council all those particulars which he must necessarily possess as head of the police, either respecting the present plot, or relating to any of the ancient members of parliament or the order of jesuits.

This was a dagger to the heart of M. de Sartines, who in vain sought to frame a suitable reply: but what could he say? He did not in reality possess any of the information for which he had received credit, and after many awkward endeavours at explaining himself, he was compelled frankly to confess, that he knew not a word more of the conspiracy than he had just then heard.

It was now the turn of M. de la Vrillière to speak. He also would fain have attacked the unfortunate lieutenant of police; but, whether M. de Maupeou thought that his own correction had been sufficiently strong, or whether he begrudged any other person interfering with his vengeance upon his personal foe, he abruptly interrupted the tirade of M. de la Vrillière, by observing, that a conspiracy conducted by only eight persons might very possibly escape the eye of the police; but, furnished as it now was with so many circumstances and particulars, it was impossible that the plot should any longer defy their vigilant researches.

M. d'Aiguillon fully concurred in this observation, and M. de Sartines, recovered in some measure fròm his first alarm, promised every thing they could desire; and it was finally arranged that the police should this night use every precautionary measure in Paris, and that the officers of the guard should receive orders to redouble their zeal and activity in watching the château; and that when the unknown female called again on me, she should be conducted by madame de Mirepoix to the duc d'Aiguillon, who would interrogate her closely.

These measures decided on, the council broke up, and I went to receive the king, who was this evening to do me the favour of taking his supper in my apartments.

CHAPTER XVII.

Conclusion of this affair—A letter from the incognita—Her examination—Arrest of Cabert the Swiss—He dies in the Bastille of poison—Madame Lorimer is arrested and poisoned—The innocence of the jesuits acknowledged—Madame de Mirepoix and the 100,000 francs—Forgetfulness on the part of the lieutenant of police—A visit from comte Jean—Madame de Mirepoix.

M. de Sartines did not sleep on his post, but his researches were fruitless; and, on the following day, three successive messengers came to announce to us that they had as yet made no discovery. The day passed without bringing any fresh intelligence, and our anxiety increased daily. At length arrived the period fixed for the visit of the incognita. I awaited the coming of this female with an impatience impossible to describe. About mid-day a note was brought me; I instantly recognised the writing as that of my mysterious friend, and hastily breaking the seal, read as follows:—

"Madam,—I must entreat your pardon for breaking the appointment for to-day, imperative duties still detain me in Paris.

"Since our last interview I have been unceasingly occupied in endeavouring to discover the names of the eight persons of whom I spoke to you, and, I am sorry to say, I have but partially succeeded. The person who has hitherto furnished me with my information, obstinately refusing to state who are the parliamentarians concerned in the conspiracy. I am, however, enabled to forward you the names of the four jesuits, with some few particulars relating to these worthy fathers.

"The jesuits in question are Messrs. Corbin, Berthier, Cerulti, and Dumas; the first of whom was employed in the education of the dauphin, the second and the third are sufficiently known; as for the fourth, he is a bold and enterprising Parisian, capable of conceiving and executing the most daring schemes. Whilst the order remained in possession of power he had no opportunity of displaying his extraordinary talents, and consequently he obtained but a trifling reputation; but since its banishment he has become its firmest support and principal hope. All the treasures of the brotherhood are at his disposal, and I learn, that the day before yesterday he received a considerable sum from Lyons.

"This intrepid and daring spirit is the very soul of the conspiracy; he it is who conceived the plan and set the whole machine in action. It would be effectually extinguished could we but once secure him, but this is by no means an easy task; he has no fixed abode; never sleeps two nights following in the same home; one day he may be found in one part of Paris and the next at the very opposite corner; he changes his manner of dress as frequently as he does his abodes.

"I shall have the honour of seeing you to-morrow or the day after at furthest. Meanwhile lay aside all uneasiness for his majesty's safety: I pledge you my word he is for the present in perfect security. The execution of the plot is still deferred for the want of a Damiens sufficiently sanguinary to undertake the task.

"Deign, madam, to accept the assurance of my sincere devotion, and believe that I will neglect no opportunity of affording you proofs of it.

"Yours, madam, &c. &c."

I immediately communicated this letter to the duc d'Aiguillon, who convoked a fresh meeting of the persons who had been present on the preceding day. It was at first deliberated whether or not to arrest the whole body of jesuits then in Paris, but this, although the advice of M. d'Aiguillon, was by no means approved of by the chancellor. M. de Sartines and M.

de la Vrillière were for carrying the idea into execution, but the objections of M. de Maupeou were too powerful to be overruled, and the scheme was for the present abandoned. The chancellor maintained that the other conspirators, warned of their own danger by the seizure of their friends, would either escape the vengeance of the laws by flight or by close confinement in their houses; he greatly dreaded as it was, that his foes, the parliamentarians, would avoid the punishment he longed to inflict on them. Indeed, in his estimation, it seemed as though every measure would be anticipated so long as the female, who seemed so intimately acquainted with their design, was at liberty; and this last opinion was unanimously concurred in.

All the delays greatly irritated me, and rendered my impatience to witness the termination of the affair greater than it had ever been. The stranger had promised to make her appearance on the following day; it passed away, however, without my hearing any thing of her. On the day following she came; I immediately sent to apprize M. d'Aiguillon, who, with M. de la Vrillière and the chancellor, entered my apartment ere the lady had had time to commence the subject upon which she was there to speak. This unexpected appearance did not seem to disconcert her in the least, nor did her sang-froid and ordinary assurance in any degree fail her. She reproached me for having intrusted the secret to so many persons, but her reproof was uttered without bitterness, and merely as if she feared lest my indiscretion might compromise our safety. She was overwhelmed with questions, and the chancellor interrogated her with the keenest curiosity; but to all the inquiries put to her she replied with a readiness and candour which surprised the whole party. She was desired to give the names of those engaged in the conspiracy, as well as of him who first informed her of it. She answered that her own name was Lorimer, that she was a widow living upon her own property. As for the man, her informant, he was a

Swiss, named Cabert, of about thirty years of age, and had long been her intimate friend: however, the embarrassed tone with which she pronounced these last words left room for the suspicion, that he had been something dearer to her than a friend. She was then urged to give up the names of the four parliamentarians, but she protested that she had not yet been able to prevail on Cabert to confide them to her; that she was compelled to use the utmost circumspection in her attempts at discovering the facts already disclosed, but flattered herself she should yet succeed in gaining a full and unreserved disclosure. M. de Maupeou encouraged her, by every possible argument, to neglect no means of arriving at so important a discovery.

The examination over, and the 100,000 francs she had demanded given to her, she retired, but followed at a distance by a number of spies, who were commissioned to watch her slightest movement.

Cabert, the Swiss, was arrested in a furnished lodging he occupied in rue Saint Roch, and sent without delay to Versailles, where, as before, M. d'Aiguillon with his two colleagues waited in my study to receive and question the prisoner. Cabert was a young and handsome man, whose countenance bore evident marks of a dissolute and profligate life. He confessed, without any difficulty, that his only means of gaining a livelihood were derived from the generosity of a female friend, but when he was pressed upon the subject of the conspiracy, he no longer replied with the same candour, but merely answered in short and impatient negatives the many questions put to him, accompanied with fervent protestations of innocence; adding, that implacable enemies had fabricated the whole story, only that they might have an opportunity of wreaking their vengeance, by implicating him in it. "Accuse not your enemies," cried I, for the first time mingling in the conversation, "but rather blame your benefactress; it is madame Lorimer who has denounced you, and far from intending to harm you by so doing, she purposes

dividing with you the 100,000 livres which are to reward her disclosures."

I easily found, by the frowning looks directed towards me by the three gentlemen present, that I had been guilty of great imprudence in saying so much; but Cabert, wringing his hands, uttered, with the most despairing accent,

"I am lost! and most horribly has the unfortunate woman avenged herself."

"What would you insinuate?"

"That I am the victim of an enraged woman," replied he.

He afterwards explained, that he had been the lover of madame Lorimer, but had become wearied of her, and left her in consequence; that she had violently resented this conduct; and, after having in vain sought to move him by prayers and supplications, had tried the most horrible threats and menaces. "I ought not indeed," continued he, "to have despised these threats, for well I knew the fiendlike malice of the wretched creature, and dearly do I pay for my imprudence, by falling into the pit she has dug for me."

In vain we endeavoured to induce him to hold a different language. He persisted with determined obstinacy in his first statement; continually protesting his own innocence, and loading the author of his woes with bitter imprecations. It was deemed impossible to allow this man to go at large; accordingly M. de la Vrillière issued a *lettre de cachet*, which sent him that night to seek a lodging in the Bastille. It was afterwards deemed advisable to put him to the torture, but the agonies of the rack wrung from him no deviation from, or contradiction of what he had previously alleged.

The affair had now become mysterious and inexplicable. However, a speedy termination was most imperatively called for; if it were permitted to become generally known, it could not fail of reaching the ears of the king, whose health was daily declining; and M.

de Quesnay had assured us, that in his present languid state, the shock produced by news so alarming, might cause his instantaneous death.

Whilst we remained in uncertainty as to our mode of proceeding in the business, Cabert, the Swiss, three days after his admission into the Bastille, expired in the most violent convulsions. His body was opened, but no trace of poison could be discovered: our suspicions were however awakened, and what followed confirmed them.

Madame Lorimer was arrested. She protested that she had been actuated by no feelings of enmity against her unfortunate lover, whom she had certainly reproached for having expended the money she furnished him with in the society of other females, and to the anger which arose between herself and Cabert on the occasion, could she alone ascribe his infamous calumnies respecting her; that, for her own part, she had never ceased to love him, and, as far as she knew, that feeling was reciprocal; and, in betraying the conspiracy, her principal desire, next to the anxious hope of preserving the king, was to make the fortune of Cabert. She was confined in the Bastille, but she did not long remain within its walls; for at the end of a fortnight she died of an inflammatory disease. Her death was marked by no convulsions, but the traces of poison were evident.

These two violent deaths occurring so immediately one after another (as not the slightest doubt existed that Cabert had likewise died of poison) threw the ministers into a sad state of perplexity. But to whom could they impute the double crime unless to some accomplice, who dreaded what the unhappy prisoners might be tempted to reveal. Yet the conduct of the jesuitical priests stated by madame Lorimer to be the principal ringleaders in the plot, although exposed to the most rigorous scrutiny, offered not the slightest grounds for suspicion. Neither did their letters (which were all intercepted at the various post-houses) give any indication of a treasonable correspondence.

M. de Sartines caused the private papers of the suspected parties to be opened during their owners' absence, without discovering anything which could compromise their character. I am speaking, however, of the fathers Corbin, Berthier, and Cerulti, for all our efforts could not trace father Dumas throughout all Paris.

Nor was the innocence of the parliamentarians less evident; they vented their hatred against the ministry, and particularly against M. de Maupeou, in pamphlets, couplets, and epigrams, both in French and Latin, but they had no idea of conspiracies or plots.

And thus terminated an affair, which had caused so much alarm, and which continued for a considerable period to engage the attention of ministers. How was the mystery to be cleared up? The poisoned orange-flower water, and the sudden deaths of the two prisoners, were facts difficult to reconcile with the no less undeniable innocence of the three accused jesuits. The whole business was to me an incomprehensible mass of confusion, in which incidents the most horrible were mingled. At last we agreed that the best and only thing to be done was to consign the affair to oblivion; but there were circumstances which did not so easily depart from the recollection of my excellent friend, the maréchale de Mirepoix. "My dear soul," said she to me one day, "have you ever inquired what became of the 100,000 livres given to madame Lorimer? she had no time to employ them in any way before her imprisonment in the Bastille. You ought to inquire into what hands they have fallen."

I fully comprehended the drift of this question, which I put to M. de Sartines the first time I saw him.

"Bless me," exclaimed he, "you remind me that these 100,000 livres have been lying in a drawer in my office. But I have such a terrible memory!"

"Happily," replied I, "I have a friend whose memory is as good as yours seems defective upon such occasions. It will not be wise to permit such a sum

to remain uselessly in your office: at the same time I need not point out that you, by your conduct in the late affair, have by no means earned a right to them."

He attempted to justify himself; but, interrupting him, I exclaimed, "My good friend, you have set up a reputation of your own creating and inventing; and well it is you took the office upon yourself for no one else would have done it for you; but you perceive how frail have been its foundations; for the moment you are compelled to stand upon your own resources you faint, and are easily overcome."

He endeavoured to make a joke of the affair, but indeed it seemed to accord as ill with his natural inclination as did the restitution of the 100,000 livres. However, he brought them to me the following day, and as I was expecting the arrival of madame de Mirepoix, I placed them in a porcelain vase which stood upon my chimney-piece. Unfortunately for the maréchale, comte Jean presented himself before she did. He came to inform me, that my husband (of whose quitting Toulouse I had forgotten to tell you) had again arrived in Paris. I did not disguise the vexation which this piece of intelligence excited in me.

"And wherefore has comte Guillaume returned to Paris?" inquired I, angrily.

"Because he is afraid."

"Afraid of what?" replied I.

"Of being murdered," answered comte Jean: "it is a most horrible and authentic story. Imagine to yourself the dangers of his situation: some brigands, who have a design on his life, have written him an anonymous billet, in which they protest they will certainly murder him, unless he deposits 50,000 livres in a certain place. You may suppose his terror; money he had none, neither was his credit sufficiently good to enable him to borrow any. As a last and only chance, he threw himself into a carriage, and hastened, tremblingly, to implore your assistance."

"And I am quite certain you will not withhold yours from him," answered I.

"You are perfectly right," cried he, "but unfortunately just now I have not a single crown I can call my own; so that it rests with you alone, my dearest sister, to save the life of this hapless comte du Barri."

"I am extremely distressed, my dear brother-in-law," replied I, "that I am just as poor, and as unable to afford the necessary aid as yourself; my purse is quite empty."

"Faith, my dear sister-in-law, I am not surprised at that if you convert a china vase into a receptacle for your bank-notes."

Saying this, he drew a bundle of notes from the hiding-place in which I had deposited them. "Do you know," continued comte Jean, "I really think we shall find money enough here." He began to count them; and when he had finished he said, "My dear sister, neither your husband nor myself wish to importune you, or put you to any inconvenience, therefore you shall merely oblige him with the loan of these 50,000 livres to extricate him from his present peril; they shall be faithfully and quickly restored to you, and a note of hand given you for that purpose if you desire it." So saying, he divided the money into two parts, replaced one in the vase, and pocketed the other.

I was very indignant at the cool impudence with which this was done, and my patience had well nigh forsaken me: however, I restrained myself; and I was happy enough that I could so far conquer myself. My reproaches would not have induced comte Jean to give me back my money, and would only have roused his violence; which, when once excited, found vent in language so vehement and energetic, that I did not desire to hear any more of it than I could help. At these moments he selected not the politest expressions, but those which were the strongest: and besides, such was the ungovernable nature of comte Jean's temper, that, once roused, he would have treated the king himself

with as little consideration as he did me. Still, he never deliberately insulted me, nor did he compose those insulting verses respecting me, which were printed as his, in *Les Anecdotes sur Madame du Barri.* This would have been an indignity I would quickly have caused him to repent having offered.

"Well," inquired I, "are you very glad to see your brother in Paris?"

"No, 'pon my soul!" returned he; "but since he is here, we must do the best we can with him; he was very anxious to see his sister-in-law and niece. He says the former is ugly as sin, and the latter almost as handsome as you."

"Very gallant," replied I; "but tell me, comte Jean, does this elegant compliment proceed from my husband or yourself?"

We were just then interrupted by the arrival of the maréchale, and comte Jean retired.

"Well, my dear," she began, "have you seen M. de Sartines? and did you speak to him respecting those 100,000 livres?"

"Oh, yes," replied I, "he gave them back to me; but I have already had half of them stolen from me."

"By comte Jean, I'll engage," cried she. "Upon my word, that man is a perfect spendthrift, a prodigal; who, if you do not take great care, will certainly ruin you. And what will you do with the remaining 50,000 livres, my dear friend; where will you place them?"

"In your hands, my dear maréchale; 'tis his majesty's command."

"To that command," answered she, "I must perforce submit;" and, taking the bundle of notes, she continued, "Assure his majesty that it will ever be my greatest pride and pleasure to obey his slightest wish. My respect for his orders can only be equalled by my tender friendship for her who is the bearer of the royal mandate." Then, deliberately putting the money in her pocket, she exclaimed, "You must own that comte Jean is a great rogue."

CHAPTER XVIII.

Some remarks upon the conspiracy—Intrigue in favour of the parliamentarians—M. de Baynes, minister for naval affairs—A visit from the duc d'Orleans—The memorial—The arrival of Louis XV.—His displeasure—Mesdames de Montmorency, de Valentinois, de l'Hôpital—Messieurs de Cossé and d'Aiguillon—Anger of comte Jean—The duc d'Orleans again—Scene between him and the king.

In relating to you, my friend, the conspiracy, whether true or false, of the jesuits and parliamentarians, I have violated a sacred engagement. Every person acquainted with the confessions of madame Lorimer had bound themselves by oath to keep a profound silence on the subject. My friends have all been faithful to their promise, nor until the present moment have I been less discreet; even the duc de Cossé was excluded from a participation in this secret. I can with truth affirm, that you are the first in favour of whom I have broken my word, and I trust that you will not betray me, but keep the secret faithfully. It is true that the principal actors in this tragedy are no more, but the fathers Berthier and Cerulti are still in existence, and any imprudent promulgation of the affair might greatly compromise their safety. I should be sorry indeed to be the cause of pain to men, who, however proscribed for state reasons, were, I am convinced, unjustly suspected.

The anxiety I had undergone from this conspiracy would have sufficed to disgust me with political affairs, and I had fully resolved to meddle no more with them, when I found myself drawn, almost involuntarily, into a fresh intrigue. This new affair was of a less gloomy character than the preceding one, and possessed importance from the object it had in view, and the character of the personage who played the principal part

in it. Some particulars relative to it have, I believe, been already before the public.

Madame de Montesson (thanks to my mediation with the king) had espoused the duc d'Orleans. Still the arrangements connected with this union were by no means calculated to satisfy the lady's self-love. She thought it hard that the duchesse d'Orleans, first princess of the blood, should only appear as the marquise de Montesson; however, the great point of her ambition was attained, and the marriage celebrated to the great annoyance and vexation of her rivals, at the head of whom was her niece, madame de Genlis.

The new duchesse d'Orleans ardently desired to increase her importance and consideration, and she imagined that, could she succeed in effecting the restoration of the ancient magistracy, she should become the object of public esteem and gratitude; for this purpose she exerted all her influence with her husband to rekindle in his heart the flame of patriotism which we had only smothered. The duc d'Orleans joined to the most estimable private virtues the sincerest devotion to his country. He loved the people of France, and wished the prosperity of his nation; in fact, he was that valuable character which has long been known by the title of a good citizen. His reappearance at court was merely an act of submission, but he had never withdrawn his protestation against the Maupeou parliament, which he had never recognised; he might, therefore, without the imputation of fickleness or perfidy, act hostilely towards it.

I have not the slightest doubt that his leading motive in the affair, was his desire of serving France. He believed the reestablishment of its ancient magistracy necessary for its prosperity, but still, he was by no means insensible to the glory with which the enterprise (if successfully terminated) would surround him. So vast a project could not be accomplished by himself alone, and he began to look about for proper coadjutors among the present ministers. The differences existing

between M. d'Aiguillon and the chancellor were well known to him, and he determined to profit by the circumstance, to draw the former over to his side; but ere he had time to put his design into execution, fortune threw into his way the minister of naval affairs, M. de Baynes. This was a man of the most profligate and abandoned morals. Among the number of his mistresses was a milliner in the rue St. Honoré, who, imitating the fidelity of her admirer, bestowed a share of her affections on a M. d'Esprémênil, who, although then in the humblest grade of life, may now be seen a member of parliament, and one of the most furious enemies of the royal family.

At the period to which I allude, he was handsome, gay, impetuous, and passionately fond of pleasure and female society. In his amours he employed that torrent of eloquence which has since been employed in exciting the passions of the seditious and rebellious populace. Madame Rameau (for that was the name of the frail mistress of M. de Baynes) had not been able to resist the assiduities of the captivating M. d'Esprémênil; indeed, such an adorer fell not frequently to the share of even the first *modiste* in Paris.

It seems that this lady was over curious with one lover, and equally indiscreet with the other, and what she learned from the secretary of state, she repeated to the irresistible M. d'Esprémênil, who learned by this means that the minister for naval affairs greatly regretted the old magistracy, and would cheerfully join in any scheme for overthrowing the new. He immediately communicated what he had heard to the duc d'Orleans, who turned the information to his own account. M. de Baynes was invited to a fête at the house of madame de Montesson, when the master of the mansion, having in a private conversation laid open his views, they each undertook to use every exertion in support of the measure. The prince inquired of his new ally, whether any thing was to be hoped from the duc d'Aiguillon, to which he replied in the negative.

This was a falsehood; advances had already been made by certain parliamentarians to the duc d'Aiguillon, who had been promised that, should he be successful in procuring the reestablishment of their body, they would, by way of evincing their gratitude, reconsider the famous Bretagne cause, and adjudge it in his favour; this was holding out a bait too tempting to be refused, and the hope of an honourable release from so deplorable an affair, had prevented M. d'Aiguillon from turning a deaf ear to the propositions of the ancient magistracy. Both M. de Baynes and myself were well aware of this fact, but he had no desire to share with his colleague the glory and profits of this negotiation. I am informed, that M. de Baynes, inferior as was his capacity, aspired to the place of prime minister, and imagined that the present was an admirable opportunity for supplanting M. d'Aiguillon. As we frequently find the persons least qualified disposed to aim at the attainment of the highest posts and offices, I will not take it upon me to affirm that such a view of the subject is by any means improbable. The minister for naval affairs and the duc d'Orleans both agreed that, to bring their scheme to bear, they must apply to me, who, according to their opinion, alone possessed sufficient influence over the mind of the king to combat effectually his prejudices against the black robes. These gentlemen first sent madame de Valentinois, and afterwards madame de Forcalquier, to sound me on the subject; with both of these ladies I was upon those terms of intimacy which amply qualified them to undertake the task. However, I treated the matter very lightly, merely observing that women had nothing to do with politics and intrigues, and would much better evince their good sense by refusing to meddle with them. As my resistance was expressed in a listless and indifferent manner, these ambassadresses, who did not understand my real disposition, mistook my manner for mere diplomatic reserve, and accordingly reported to those who had sent them, that I was suffi-

ciently well disposed towards the business, and only required to be more strenuously urged.

The duc d'Orleans, since his reconciliation with the king, paid me frequent visits; seldom, indeed, a week passed without his calling upon me two or three times, so that I experienced no surprise when he appeared before me the very day following one on which I had had the honour of his company for a considerable length of time. Still his hurried and agitated manner did not escape my observation. The conversation was at first upon indifferent subjects, and it had just assumed a more serious tone when M. de Baynes was announced. The prince appeared delighted to see him, whilst I, who had seen him only the evening previous, was so much astonished at this assiduity, that I could not forbear inquiring the cause of it.

"Madam," replied he, "I had thought his serene highness had explained it to you, and I am here to converse with you on the subject you should learn only from his lips. His serene highness permits me to act in concert with him, and I bring you here, madam," continued he, putting his hand into his pocket, "a little memorial which I have been occupied this morning in drawing up."

I turned towards the prince as if demanding an explanation. "This mystery shall be speedily cleared up," replied the prince, interpreting my look, "but since M. de Baynes has prepared a written statement of the facts, we cannot do better than listen to it."

The secretary of state again approached his hand to his pocket. "With all my heart," answered I; "let us hear your little memorial, and I promise you to give my most undivided attention to your perusal of it."

The roll of paper was at length drawn from the pocket of his excellency, and I saw, to my great delight, that it was but a very small quantity. The first few pages by no means satisfied my curiosity; they merely set forth that the project in question was great, useful,

glorious, favourable to the prosperity of the people, and the renown of the monarch; but there are so many things designated in the same manner as great and glorious to both prince and people, that still no ray of light broke in upon me. At length the grand point came out, and I understood that the matter in hand was to procure the expulsion of the new parliament and the restoration of the old one.

"Stay," exclaimed I; "this is a question I am not competent to decide upon, and one with which I will not interfere."

"Reflect," said the duke to me, "that you may, by securing the friendship and support of the parliamentarians, put the finishing stroke to your good fortune. It depends upon yourself alone to change these terrible enemies, the only ones you have to dread, into devoted friends. During the reign of Louis XV. they will heighten the splendour of your power by their homages, and when the present king shall be no more, they will be your firm defenders."

"I have sufficient worshippers for the present," replied I, "and I trust, that for the future I need not provide defenders. Envious and ill-disposed persons will always abound, but, thank heaven, I know of no enemies I need fear, nor can I, who have never injured any person, have one. When I can no longer excite the jealousy of any individual, justice will be done me; but for the intrigue in question, I decidedly refuse to take any part in it; in the first place, because I know his majesty's implacable hatred to the ancient magistracy, his greatest joy and pride is to think he has destroyed it, nor will he ever consent to its reestablishment."

"You possess," replied the duke, "a sovereign empire over the king's mind, how can you more nobly and wisely employ it, than in counselling him to undertake a measure which will be hailed with delight by the whole nation?"

"So brilliant a prospect cannot dazzle me," answered

I. "I am not first prince of the blood, like your highness; nor secretary of state, like M. de Baynes. I am only the chosen friend and companion of the king, and my duty consists in contributing to his comfort and amusement, not governing France; that is an office I leave in his majesty's hands, or to your grace of Orleans if you are pleased to undertake it, or to this gentleman and his colleagues, who are well paid for making the safety of the nation their care."

M. de Baynes was speechless; the turn our conversation had taken perfectly terrified him, and he began to fear he had gone too far; instead of supporting the duc d'Orleans like a faithful ally, he deserted him, nor uttered one word more in favour of his great, useful, and glorious project. He was about to consign his little memorial again to his pocket, when the door suddenly opened and the king entered the room. His unexpected appearance surprised me, and threw the minister into a state of lamentable alarm. At the first glance of the parties before him, Lous XV. perceived, with his usual keenness of observation, that we were discussing no ordinary topic of conversation, and what further confirmed him in this idea was the memorial which de Baynes still held in his hand. The duc d'Orleans extended his arm to seize so important a document, but Louis XV. made his minister a sign to give it to him alone; the trembling M. de Baynes obeyed in silence.

"I fear I disturb you," said the king with affected gentleness, "you were busily engaged with the comtesse du Barri. May I presume to ask my cousin what was the question in agitation?"

The duke kept silence, and appeared to turn over to us, the disagreeable task of replying to the king's question; but I spitefully took refuge within the circle of my duties, and it formed no part of them to speak before a prince of the blood; "honour be where honour is due," says the proverb, and so I acted. As for poor M. de Baynes it was less respect than terror that de-

stroyed his powers of articulation; he appeared petrified, and would have been an object of real pity had he not been at the same time so well calculated to inspire contempt. The king finding we seemed equally dumb and motionless, had recourse to the memorial of M. de Baynes, which he read very leisurely from one end to the other. We awaited the result in breathless silence; when he had concluded it, he said, addressing himself to the duke—

"Cousin, I am truly sorry to find you mixed up in such an intrigue. I have abolished the parliaments because I had reason for feeling dissatisfied with their conduct. I have by that means consolidated that royal authority which they aimed at destroying, pacified France which their seditious example had well nigh instigated to a revolt; and would you have me now revoke so grand and useful a measure? would you ask me to retrace my steps, and hold myself up to the derision and contempt of France as well as all Europe, as a weak and pusillanimous prince? No, never! Since I have put down these factious men, I feel myself more firmly seated on my throne, and so long as I hold the sceptre, they shall never return to power. I pardon you your present conduct in consideration of the excellent motives by which you appear to have been actuated, and because no ill consequences have followed your ill-judged scheme. But let it stop here, or there is an end of all friendship between us.

"As for you, sir," continued he, turning towards M. de Baynes, "I am highly displeased with your conduct; you are my minister, and yet you take upon yourself to protect and uphold the most deadly foes to my authority; you are one of the heads of government, and you associate yourself upon terms of friendship with rebels, who are unceasingly occupied in destroying its power and credit. You merit a severe punishment, but I pardon you out of consideration for my cousin of Orleans. Return, sir, to your office; occupy yourself in the affairs of the navy, and endeavour to

atone for your present misconduct by a superior fidelity."

The unhappy de Baynes, thunderstruck at these words, quitted the room with a silent bow. It was now my turn to be reprimanded, and already had his majesty turned towards me for that purpose, when the duc d'Orleans sought to divert the storm which hung threatening over my head."

" Sire," said he to the king, " madame du Barri has shown greater wisdom than myself, or M. de Baynes; for, in the fear of displeasing your majesty, she refused to take any part in this affair, nor could all my efforts overcome her determination. I am merely discharging an act of justice in stating thus much. She has not shared our fault, and ought not to participate in our punishment."

" You have indeed showed more good sense than either of these gentlemen, madam," returned the king, " and I am much pleased with you for your prudence. Act always as discreetly, and I shall be satisfied. Never meddle with these plots and intrigues, which are only calculated to set people by the ears. Remain perfectly quiet; and, depend upon it, it will turn out for our mutual advantage."

This surprise did turn to my advantage. I was penetrated with gratitude for the generous conduct of the duc d'Orleans; any other person but himself would have thrown off his share in the matter, by allowing suspicion to rest on my shoulders; but his serene highness behaved as a man of honour would do, for probity is so little known at court, that it easily passes there for delicacy and generous feeling.

When I was alone with the king, I related to him all that had passed between the duc d'Orleans, the minister for naval affairs, and myself. This recital rekindled the anger of his majesty against M. de Baynes, whom he looked upon as the principal instigator of this intrigue, and I saw, not without pity for the poor man, that he was preparing for him a fresh lecture

more severe than the former one had been; he begged of me to let him know directly if any fresh overtures were made me on the subject.

"But surely, sire," said I, "after the scene of to-day they will never venture to renew it."

"You know but little of the persons you allude to," replied Louis XV. "Know that no race of men is so persevering in its intrigues as the magistracy, excepting always the clergy, for these other gentlemen of the black robe are even more tenacious than the former ones. Do not mention to any person," continued he, "what has just taken place, it would be immediately repeated to the chancellor; that would cause a disagreement between him and M. de Baynes, and I most heartily desire to have all around me in peace with each other."

I readily promised secrecy, for I had as little taste as his majesty for gossiping, tattling, and the quarrels of courtiers.

Several days elapsed without my hearing a single word respecting the parliamentarians. The duc d'Orleans, although he visited me as usual, did not allude to the subject, and I imitated his silence. I had written him a note on the evening of this memorable day, in which I thanked him for his conduct towards myself, and assured him that any fresh attempts, either on his own part or that of his friends, would be wholly useless, as my determination of remaining neuter was fixed and irrevocable. He replied by a few words written with studied politeness, but containing little real meaning. I now believed myself freed from all importunity; but, whilst feeding myself with these expectations, they were renewed with fresh importunity and more violence than ever. Madame de Montmorency, madame de Valentinois, and madame de l'Hôpital came by turns to implore, pray, and supplicate me in favour of the exiled party. Men joined their eloquence to that of the women; M. d'Aiguillon was positively resolved upon the reinstalment of his ancient friends,

and spoke to me on the subject with great warmth. M. de Cossé likewise urged me on the same subject with arguments not less pressing, but far more disinterested. I underwent a positive persecution, and really knew not how to make head against so many attacks at once. I entreated of M. de Cossé not to avail himself of his ascendency over me to induce me to engage in a design from which I was interdicted by the positive orders of the king. He had the kindness and delicacy to listen to my prayers, and the ancient magistracy lost in him the most influential of all its advocates with me.

There remained one not less zealous, whom I feared equally with M. de Cossé, although for very different reasons; this was comte Jean, who entered my drawing-room one day, calling out, or rather vociferating, that he was perfectly enraged with me for refusing to aid his friends, the old parliament, in recovering their original credit.

"I am very sorry," said I, "that it should so greatly offend you, but I must candidly assure you, that if ever your parliamentarian friends are reestablished in power, it must be without my participating in the business."

"Then you must take the consequences," exclaimed comte Jean; "as yet you are by no means disliked, you pass even for a kind and good creature, but, ere long, you will be detested, abhorred, and, with your odious Maupeou, be the execration of all Paris; stigmatized as one of the beggarly crew of whom he has composed his contemptible parliament. And what is it now, sister," continued he, in a somewhat softer tone, "that you are asked to do? Why nothing more than to speak to the king, to prevail on him to listen to better counsellors than those his scoundrel of a chancellor has provided him with. Very possibly you might not succeed, but try at least. This is the general cry and request of all honest and well-disposed persons."

"Indeed! and what can you know of the opinion of virtuous persons, comte Jean? unless, indeed, you

have quite recently changed your style of companions."

At length, when he found my resolution not to be shaken, he lavished upon me all the opprobrious epithets and strong language his well-stored memory could furnish him with, and then flung himself out of the apartment, declaring I should never see him there again. I was not very much afraid of his adhering too rigorously to this threat, for well I knew his fraternal tenderness would return when his empty pockets warned him to seek a fresh supply of cash. And I was not mistaken. At his first run of ill-luck he flew to implore of me to repair the caprices of fortune.

Whilst these things were going on, the duc d'Orleans sent one of his gentlemen-in-waiting to request a private audience. I could not refuse it him, but I acquainted the king of it, who observed, "These intrigues must be put an end to, and I will now terminate them by a decisive blow. When you and my cousin are engaged in conversation, I will come in and speak to him in a way that shall take away all desire on his part to renew the subject."

This project of the king's was far from pleasing me, it appeared calculated to impress an air of perfidy over my conduct, still I durst not oppose it, although I certainly should have done so, could I have anticipated to what extremities Louis XV. intended carrying matters with the duc d'Orleans, and how many calumnies and hateful implications my weakness in avoiding it would ultimately draw down upon me.

At the appointed hour the duke arrived, he entered at once into the business upon which he came, made me the most brilliant offers for the future, and had well nigh assured me the title of princess. I do not exactly know how he would have been able to have performed all this. The poor duke little thought there was a witness of our conversation, indeed, I was equally far from suspecting it either; this witness was the king, who, having watched for the arrival of the prince, had

slipped into a cabinet in the adjoining room, from which retreat he came forth with great anger and irritation, to address the most violent reproaches to his cousin.

The prince conducted himself with the most admirable dignity and self-possession, and took refuge, not in his presence of mind, of which he possessed a very slender stock, but in the candour and noble frankness which formed the basis of his character. He began by regretting, that his opinions should unhappily differ from those of his majesty; said that he had no other aim than to promote the welfare of his country and the glory of his sovereign, and if it must be so, so ardently did he desire the prosperity of the former, that, to secure it, he could be contented for a time to forfeit the friendship of the latter. These calm and moderate sentiments had no effect upon the disturbed state of the king's feelings, and I feared that his anger would pass all bounds. With a view to turn the current of his ideas, I said, just as he was about to reply sharply to the duke,

"Indeed, sire, you must permit me to remind you that you broke in upon our discourse most unexpectedly. Your conduct has placed me in a very disagreeable situation with regard to his serene highness, who may reasonably conclude that I was informed of what you meant to do."

"And if it were so, madam," answered the king, you would only have done your duty. But, as I believed my cousin the other day, when he exculpated you from the charge of being in league with him, I trust he will not now doubt my word, when I affirm that there has been no connivance between us this day, and that I have surprised you both in this manner, because I deemed it essential for the good of my kingdom."

CHAPTER XIX.

Marriage of the comte d'Artois—The comtesse du Barri at dinner—The aigrette of diamonds—The dauphiness and madame du Barri—Zamor appointed governor of Lucienne—Affront offered by the dauphin to madame du Barri—Severe remark of the comtesse de Marsan to his royal highness—The king dresses an omelette for supper.

If the duc d'Orleans felt displeased with the king's behaviour, Louis XV. on his part, was no less dissatisfied with his serene highness. However, I exerted my utmost endeavours to effect a reconciliation between them, which, at length, I happily and fully accomplished, upon condition that the duke should engage to make no further effort in favour of the ex-parliaments.

Spite of the secrecy he had promised, his highness related the affair to several persons, and among others to madame de Montesson, who, disliking me for being, as she imagined, the cause of the king's refusing publicly to acknowlege her marriage, accused me of having acted perfidiously, inveighed bitterly against me, and sought to create enemies for me among a description of persons already but too well disposed to become such—the ancient magistracy.

Meanwhile, the period for the marriage of the comte d'Artois was fast approaching. The young prince eagerly anticipated its arrival as the signal for his emancipation. The careful watchfulness of those around him was insupportable to one of his violent and impetuous disposition.

Louis XV. was exceedingly partial to the comte d'Artois, followed his youthful indiscretions with the sincerest anxiety, and whilst affecting openly to blame his lovesick fancies, would laugh in private at them.

The ceremony took place on the 16th of October; hitherto, the stern rules of etiquette had regulated all such occasions, but the present joyful event was celebrated with a burst of general feeling and unrestrained delight, which must have been highly gratifying to the youthful pair who were principally concerned in it. The prince had at all times evinced the utmost kindness and politeness towards me, and I most heartily concurred in wishing him every possible happiness. I little anticipated whilst witnessing the pomp of his splendid hymen, that vile and unprincipled men would have it in their power so far to render the prince (now so justly an object of universal homage) odious and suspected by his countrymen that he should be compelled to quit France. This lamentable event, which took place the week following the destruction of the Bastille, plunged me into the deepest sorrow. What will all these things lead to, my friend? what will become of our devoted country? Alas! I know not, but I feel well assured things would never have reached their present height under the reign of the late king. Never, so long as life remained within him, would he have permitted the rising of the Parisians, nor the factious resistance of the states-general. But times have changed, and our horizon, already sufficiently dark with threatening clouds, seems big with the coming storm. Alas! alas!! but it is not of the present period I should now speak. I return to the marriage of the comte d'Artois.

I shall ever recall with pleasure the royal banquet; I was seated (not at table, etiquette did not permit that, but) opposite his majesty. I was in the full possession of my good looks, if I might believe the envious glances directed to me by the several duchesses present. It has been asserted that I wore, on that memorable day, diamonds to the value of five millions; that, however, is an exaggerated statement, their utmost value was three millions. My dress was composed of cloth of gold, trimmed with roses tied together by bows of dia-

monds; each of my ear-rings cost 100,000 crowns; my belt and head-dress were proportionably costly. The king, who was in raptures with my dazzling appearance, seemed scarcely able to gaze on any other object, and continued to converse with me by signs, to the great annoyance of the dauphiness, who always beheld me with dislike.

I forgot to mention in its proper place, a trick which this princess played me, and which was long talked of in the castle, very probably for no other reason than because it was known to be unpleasant to me; the thing was trifling enough in itself, but swelled into importance by the malignity of those concerned in it. The affair was as follows:—

I had directed my jeweller to make me the most magnificent diamond aigrette ever seen. I know not who had the kindness to apprize the princess of the circumstance, but, however that may have been, when the jeweller came to bring me the elegant ornament he had made, he received orders to wait upon the dauphiness immediately, without waiting to see me or any person. When M. Lebon was introduced to the princess, she inquired whether he had not some trinket or other with him. M. Lebon, who suspected no harm, instantly displayed my aigrette, which the dauphiness extolled as very beautiful, and declared her intention of purchasing it. M. Lebon, who feared incurring my displeasure, replied that the article in question was not his to dispose of, but belonged to the comtesse du Barri. "No matter," replied the dauphiness, "I shall keep it just the same, and the comtesse du Barri can order another, for this one shall be mine."

Poor M. Lebon was compelled to retire in despair, and sent his son to inform me of what had passed. In a similar case madame de Pompadour would have waged open war; would have complained to the king, and demanded vengeance at his hands; but I was careful to avoid such a line of conduct, and contented myself with writing the following letter to the dauphiness:—

"MADAM,—I have just learned that your royal highness has purchased of M. Lebon a diamond aigrette I had bespoke for myself. I am truly happy that the ornament pleased you, and only regret, not having presumed to suppose it might have been to your taste, that I might have enjoyed the gratification of offering it myself for your acceptance, as a small token of the respectful and sincere attachment, with which I am,

"Your royal highness's most devoted servant,

"THE COMTESSE DU BARRI."

When the king was informed of the manner in which I had behaved in the affair, he was quite charmed, and a few days after recompensed me for the sacrifice I had made, by presenting me with an aigrette composed of the finest oriental rubies surrounded with large diamonds, and a necklace formed of four hundred pearls, each pearl weighing from four to five grains each. As for the dauphiness, directly she received my note, she sent her page in waiting, M. de la Châtagueraie, to express her satisfaction at my complaisance. And thus terminated an affair, in which I venture to say I displayed a degree of sense, so much the more praiseworthy, as it was but little expected from me.

Louis XV. continued equally kind and desirous of promoting my wishes as ever. I have already mentioned to you my little African, Zamor, then so lively, pleasing, and full of mirth. One day that the king had been amusing himself with him, I said,

"Really, sire, you owe this entertaining little creature some mark of your royal favour."

"With all my heart," replied the king, "let me see, what shall I do for him?" He was thoughtful for a few moments, and then said, "I will appoint him governor of the château de Lucienne, with a salary of 600 livres."

I thanked his majesty for this act of generosity, but added,

"With your permission, sire, I should wish to have

the credentials necessary for entering upon this office regularly drawn up, and sealed with the state seal."

"That," replied the king, "is not my province, but belongs to the chancellor, you had better signify your wish to him."

"And that I will do," returned I, "and I doubt not M. de Maupeou will arrange things to my entire satisfaction."

The fact was, our reconciliation remained an entire secret until the king's death, and the courtiers were greatly amused at seeing the poor chancellor so brought down from his high estate as to be reduced to the necessity of affixing the seal of state on the order for converting one of my pages into a petty officer.

However, my life at court was not always one of content; on the contrary, disagreeables sprung up from time to time, which afforded me the utmost pain. I will cite, by way of example, the ungentlemanly reception I received from his royal highness the dauphin, when, in my capacity of chaperon, I escorted mademoiselle de Tournon, now become vicomtesse du Barri.

I have already told you that my nephew had espoused mademoiselle de Tournon, a creature perfectly captivating by her many graces of person, and charms of mind. She was, indeed, beautiful enough to have turned any head. There were but two persons in the whole château who could resist her many captivating qualities; the one her husband, who, having flattered and petted her during the long honeymoon, had now abandoned her for the most depraved females in Paris, and the second the king, who saw in her merely the wife of a du Barri, without paying the slightest attention to her beauty. This indifference was far from being agreeable to comte Jean, who, I am persuaded, had already formed the project of putting his daughter-in-law into my place. However, leaving this for the present, I will proceed to relate to you the unpoliteness with which the dauphin conducted himself towards me.

I accompanied the vicomtesse du Barri to his house; when we entered the saloon he was standing with his back to the door, drumming with his fingers upon the panes of glass in the window. The gentleman in waiting, the duc de la Vauguyon, informed him that we were awaiting him, but he paid not the least attention to the intimation, but continued very coolly to finish his tattoo on the glass. We waited patiently several minutes, but finding that he was not likely to recover his politeness, we curtsied and left him. I wept with rage all the way home, and my poor niece was equally distressed.

When next the king visited me, I related with many tears the rude and contemptuous manner in which his grandson had received me. His majesty sought to console me; and to every fresh burst of grief Louis XV. repeated the question, "Well, what would you have me do with him? I cannot banish the heir to the crown from my kingdom."

It was during the exasperation produced by the scene I have just described, that I was guilty of uttering and repeating those unprincipled calumnies concerning the dauphiness, which none but the basest minds could ever have invented. Never shall I be able to forgive myself for having so acted, and I must blush for my folly to the end of my life; and now that traitorous wretches have presumed to urge these detestable falsehoods against the queen, the recollection of my imprudence is like the gnawings of remorse for the commission of some deadly crime.

But to return to my reception, the vicomtesse du Barri was no better pleased with the indignity we had received than myself, and complained of it to her relations, the prince de Condé and the maréchal de Soubise. This latter, unable to account for so singular a circumstance, called on the dauphin accompanied by the comtesse de Marsan, who was the terror of the whole court. These two personages represented to the dauphin how greatly distressed the vicomtesse du Barri

justly felt at her reception, especially as she had been presented by a lady whom the king particularly honoured with his friendship. The dauphin, who was of a very timid nature, sought to excuse himself, by saying he did not hear us announced. "That indeed sufficiently explains the affair," replied madame de Marsan to his royal highness; "it was indeed impossible to believe that a person of your rank and descent should have been capable of offering an insult to females. Such a defect was never heard of in your noble house, and has never been tolerated in France."

The keen propriety of this lesson was universally acknowledged. Louis XV. declared, that, in his estimation, I was amply avenged, and that, for the future, it would not be worth while preserving any recollection of the offence.

"And now," said he, "my dear countess, that, I trust, peace and tranquillity are once more restored to my family, I beg to invite you to supper in my apartments next Monday, to meet the vicomtesse du Barri and the maréchale de Mirepoix; I will give you such an omelette to eat!"

"Made with a master's hand, I presume?" added I, laughing.

"Yes," replied the king, with an air of pride, "and I can assure you that you have never partaken of such an omelette."

You will easily imagine that Louis XV. promised us an omelette of his making: he was indeed very fond of culinary affairs, and particularly interested in studying the various branches of the art of cooking. *Les Dons de Comus*, and *La Cuisinière Bourgeoise*, were his most favourite volumes, and he knew them by heart. I must relate to you a trifling anecdote on the subject of the king's love of cooking. A head cook, whom I had lately engaged, coming one day to receive directions from me respecting a dinner I was about to give, at which some favourite dish of the king's was to be served up, Louis XV., who was with me at the time,

began to explain to the man the most palatable and savoury manner of preparing it. The cook, who had no idea that he was in the presence of his sovereign, listened with enthusiasm for some time, and then exclaimed, "I see, sir, that you are a first-rate hand in our profession, and no doubt you receive excellent wages."

However, it must be confessed, that kings in general do not make good cooks; they possess neither the requisite attention nor patience: of this we had a sufficient proof in Monday's supper. Besides the persons mentioned as intended guests, there were the ducs d'Aiguillon and d'Ayen, and the prince de Soubise. The omelette was brought to table, but burned in a terrible manner. The guests ooked at each other with an air of consternation; nevertheless Louis XV. proceeded to help each person to it, and then, taking a part himself, he said, "It is rather burnt, to be sure, but still quite eatable."

I need not say that every one eat of this execrable omelette, but the stomach of a courtier is as much at his prince's disposal as his heart.

CHAPTER XX.

The vicomtesse du Barri and her husband—She complains of him to madame du Barri—The viscount and the femme de chambre Catherine—Death of the marquis de Chauvelin—Disgrace of the marquis de Monteynard—Exile of comte Jean—His mistress quits him—His quarrel with the ministers—Reconciliation.

Early one morning my niece entered my apartment, her lovely face bathed in tears. She threw herself into

my arms, and embraced me with that warmth of affection she really felt for me; then wiping her eyes, she said,

"Dear aunt, teach me the secret by which people render themselves beloved."

"In a hundred different manners," replied I; "not one of which resemble the other, and yet all succeed. Some females render themselves adorable by evincing a devotedness of affection, others by the charms of their mind; some, by feigning great coolness and indifference; some are captivating by their modesty, others by their light coquetish smiles and graces. Some there are—but, for mercy's sake, my dear niece, whence proceed all these questions?"

"Because," answered the poor viscountess, bursting into a fresh flow of grief, "because I love my husband dearly, but cannot succeed in inducing him to love me."

"Oh, is that all?" cried I, smiling; "upon my word a very novel subject of chagrin! Why, I really thought, my dear, you were going to complain of some lover."

"Dear aunt, what should I want with lovers? Believe me, I have none."

"I cannot answer for that, my fair niece; at any rate, friends and relations are always the last informed on such subjects. However, if the vicomte Adolphe behaves unfaithfully towards you, he will have no cause for complaint if you retaliate."

"Alas, my dear aunt! I am not thinking of vengeance; I only wish I could inspire my beloved husband with an equal tenderness to that which I feel for him. You, dearest aunt, who can charm every one, surely can teach me how to please him alone."

"Listen, then, my child, to the little advice I am able to afford you. You are too fond, too assiduous, and attentive to your husband. Men are strange capricious creatures, and care only for those things which cost them much difficulty to attain. Now, if I were you, I would immediately provide separate apartments."

"Dear aunt! suppose he should wish to see me, to speak to me."

"Then I would not listen to one word he had to say."

"He would fancy I did not love him."

"I would listen to the conversation of some elegant and agreeable youth."

"Alas! what good would that do? It would but excite his jealousy, and that can never tend to draw two divided hearts together."

"Why, then, my dear child, pray think for yourself of some plan for bringing back your truant husband; for my own part, I can give you no farther advice."

"My dear aunt," exclaimed the weeping viscountess, "how truly miserable am I."

She then related to me, that her husband paid frequent visits to a girl named Junissane, and that she had frequently formed the resolution of surprising the traitor with his mistress. I cautioned her against ever undertaking such a measure, which was calculated only to bring on unpleasant scenes and fatal consequences. When I had amply supplied her with directions, if not consolation, she took leave of me, and returned home.

I thought it my duty to mention what I had heard to comte Jean, who burst into a violent fit of rage at the recital. He styled his son both an ingrate and a fool. "What," said he, "after I have procured him an alliance with a prince of the blood, he is mad enough to quit a young and beautiful wife to run after the very scum and refuse of Paris! But, *morbleu!* things shall not go on thus; I will make him understand that I am no drivelling old dotard, who is to be treated with this disrespect. I would have him to know, that so long as I shall be comte Jean du Barri, my will and opinion shall be more respected than this young scapegrace seems to think necessary."

After having long ruminated on the best way of showing his anger, my brother-in-law adopted a resolution worthy of himself, which was to carry off mademoiselle Junissane himself, and so remove so

dangerous a rival from the eyes of his son. It appeared to me a most singular expedient: however, I furnished the money necessary for the completion of this good work, which I had the satisfaction to see perfectly succeed.

My nephew, enraged at the paternal conduct of comte Jean, came to complain of it to me. I seized this opportunity to read him a fine lecture on morality, reproaching him with his unjustifiable conduct towards his young and lovely partner. He sought to palliate his conduct; assured me of his intention to reform; and, by way of proving it, was indefatigable in his visits to me. I was perfectly surprised at this change, when Henriette furnished me with the key to the enigma, by informing me that the vicomte Adolphe was compromising the honour of my house by paying the most ardent court to one of my femmes de chambre, named Catherine, a female of little beauty, but possessed of lively and pleasing manners. I was thunderstruck at hearing this news. You perhaps recollect the little lecture I read Sophie, when informed of the attentions paid her by the duc de Villeroi.

I sent for Catherine as I had done upon the former occasion, that I might admonish her of the dangerous situation in which she was placed.

"What is this I hear, mademoiselle?" I asked, with a severe look and tone; "I am informed that you presume so far as to encourage the advances of my nephew."

"Alas, madam!" replied Catherine, "we must do our best in this world, and I am sure you are too good to stand in the way of a poor girl's advancement."

"How! advancement! what do you mean, Catherine?"

"Merely to better myself as I see others do; to procure fine clothes, a carriage, an hotel, an allowance. Indeed I see nothing very disagreeable in all these things."

"Catherine," answered I, "I am sorry to find you

capable of uttering such sentiments, and can only say your want of beauty is only equalled by your want of sense."

"Oh! as for that, madam," returned she, pertly, "perhaps you are no judge; at least all the gentlemen call me pretty, and they always understand such matters better than ladies."

"Leave my house instantly," exclaimed I, indignant at her levity and boldness; "but be careful how you furnish my niece with any cause for uneasiness, or you shall most assuredly remember it."

Catherine curtsied and left me. She immediately repaired to Paris, where my graceless nephew placed her in furnished apartments: she remained under his protection for some months, and then exchanged it for that of a rich Spanish don; from him she passed into the hands of a Russian, and next bestowed herself upon a wealthy banker: in a word, she followed up her profession with such consummate skill, that she was enabled to gain the sum of 60,000 livres per annum. About a year ago she married a comte de Cermir, who quickly dissipated both principal and interest of her fortune. Poor Catherine was very near being compelled to return to her original employment of femme de chambre to procure a subsistence.

As for the vicomte Adolphe, his cruel neglect and ill-treatment of his wife eventually deprived him of the tender affection she had once felt for him; and so entirely did her many injuries turn the bent of her kindly feelings towards him, that when he died she ceased to bear either name or arms of du Barri. I now return to the events of 1775.

About the close of this year a circumstance occurred, which spread a general gloom throughout the castle. The king was one evening supping in my apartments: there were present besides himself, the maréchale de Mirepoix, the duc de Duras, and the marquis de Chauvelin. This latter had appeared to me in his usual health, and after supper we conversed gaily toge-

ther for some time; indeed he was of a remarkably lively and cheerful nature, and enlivened every party at which he was a guest by the brilliancy of his wit. The maréchale de Mirepoix proposed a game of piquet with the duc de Duras, whom Louis XV. undertook to direct in his play: the maréchale, to equalize the game, summoned M. de Chauvelin to her assistance; he immediately quitted me, and went to station himself behind the back of her chair, where he continued to advise, laugh, and joke, till, all at once, the king, happening to look towards him, exclaimed, "For heaven's sake, Chauvelin, what ails you? You are surely ill!" The marquis made no reply, but endeavoured to support himself by the chair behind which he stood; in another moment he fell senseless on the floor: we hastened to him, but he was dead.

I leave it to you to imagine the horror and alarm this unexpected event spread amongst us. The king, who was deeply grieved as well as shocked, said not a word, but, mournfully pressing my hand, immediately retired to his chamber. From that period no one ventured to name the marquis de Chauvelin in his hearing; but the king did not so easily forget his old friend, and conferred the office of keeper of the wardrobe upon the eldest son of the lamented nobleman. You know the young lord I allude to; he is, at the present day, one of the brightest ornaments of the French court, and deservedly well spoken of for his amiable private character, and many public virtues and accomplishments.

Another event, which took place about the same period, caused almost as great a sensation as the death of M. de Chauvelin; this was the dismissal of the marquis de Monteynard, minister of war. The king had a strong partiality for him, and his office was just as warmly regarded by M. d'Aiguillon, who had never ceased, since the exile of M. de Choiseul, to covet the post for himself.

The prince de Condé, in effecting the appointment of

his protégé, the marquis de Monteynard, to this enviable employment, had obtained from him a promise to bestow on him (the prince) the title of high admiral of France, a dignity which, besides immense honorary considerations, was supported by a salary of 400,000 livres. Once admitted into the ministry, M. de Monteynard forgot his promise; and, seeing himself firmly established in the king's affections, put off, by a thousand turns and windings, the fulfilment of it from day to day. The duc d'Aiguillon, informed of these particulars, resolved to deprive his colleague of the royal favour, at present so liberally shown him. For this purpose he advised his serene highness (by the intervention of madame de Monaco) to present a memorial to the king, beseeching he would bestow upon him the office of high admiral. M. d'Aiguillon justly conceived that the king would submit the petition to the minister of war, who would in all probability, decide unfavourably to the interests of the prince de Condé; who, thus furnished with fair grounds for hostilities, would immediately attack his former protégé.

Things fell out precisely as the duke had anticipated. The prince de Condé having written to request of his majesty the post in question, the marquis de Monteynard was immediately summoned that he might give his opinion. He replied, with his accustomed roughness and candour, that it was useless burdening the nation with the large sum of 400,000 livres a year, when the office itself was a mere sinecure. The king greatly approved of saving so much money, and accordingly replied to his relation's demand by a direct refusal.

The prince de Condé thus repulsed, became the declared enemy of the marquis de Monteynard, and waged open war against him. I meanwhile used my most urgent recommendations of the duc d'Aiguillon, till the king, pressed and tormented on all sides, knew not what to do. One day that I had excessively importuned him, he exclaimed, "It certainly is a most sin-

gular thing that I am not allowed to keep a minister when I happen to find one to my mind."

I did not immediately reply, but in a short time I again returned to the charge, till at length the patience of Louis XV. gave way, and he yielded to what he could no longer endure the fatigue of opposing. The marquis de Monteynard was dismissed, and the duc d'Aiguillon summoned to his majesty's presence, who said to him, "For the present I depute you to fill the appointment now vacant by the dismission of M. de Monteynard, and I only trust it will not be necessary for me to take it out of your hands."

Whilst I thus managed to compel the king to dismiss the marquis de Monteynard even against his own inclinations, I was compelled to consent to the temporary exile of my brother-in-law, who had incurred the necessity of such a punishment in the following manner.

Comte Jean, who must likewise exhibit his skill and ability to patronize, had bestowed his favour upon a man named Dessein, whom he desired to place as director of the *fermes*; and, spite of the opposition made by the united body of farmers-general, he carried the affair with a high hand. So far all was well; but comte Jean was weak enough to boast every where of his success in terms so vain and insulting, that the duc d'Aiguillon advised me to punish the silly and imprudent man, by removing him for the present from the possibility of drawing down upon me the dangerous enmity of the farmers-general. You should have seen the rage and fury of my brother-in-law when informed that it had become necessary for him to leave Paris. By way of taking off the bitterness of the blow, it was agreed between us that he should be reported to have gone to take possession of the countship of the Isle en Jourdain, which the king had just given to him, and which was said to produce an income of more than 100,000 livres per annum. He departed, and not expecting to make a long stay in Languedoc, left his old mistress, madame Muralt, at Paris.

This lady profited by his absence to take a new lover, with whom she quitted the capital. I know not who informed comte Jean of the affair, but upon the first intimation of the cruel misfortune which had befallen him he flew back to Paris, where he employed all the agents of the police to track out his guilty mistress, but in vain; he lost alike his time, trouble, and money. Never have I witnessed any thing more ludicrous than the despair of comte Jean, and every time I saw him I was ready to expire with laughter. The king, on the contrary, displayed the sincerest interest in the affair, listened to him, consoled him, and a few days afterwards graciously inquired whether he had not been fortunate enough to meet with a new mistress who might replace madame Muralt in his affections.

This mishap, which was a just punishment, might have touched the heart of my brother-in-law, and have worked some reformation in his life and principles, but no such thing; he continued to lead the most disorderly life, and one which cost the state no trifle to support. He played dreadfully high, lost enormous sums, and, when his creditors became importunate, gave them an order on the comptroller-general. This officer, who could on his own account have easily consumed the whole treasure of the state, grew weary at length of allowing it to be plundered by comte Jean: he came one day to talk it over with me and the duc d'Aiguillon: he showed us the total of the different sums with which he had supplied my brother-in-law, and the amount was one of overwhelming magnitude. We all agreed, that the next time one of the honourable count's orders should be presented to the comptroller-general payment should be refused. The opportunity for so doing was not long in presenting itself, and comte Jean, foaming with rage, flew to the abbé Terray, where a scene of violence ensued which baffles description: oaths and imprecations flew about like hail; and, by the language made use of, an indifferent spec-

tator would have believed himself many miles from court.

After this amusing contest my brother-in-law came to complain to me of the presumption of the abbé, and to request vengeance upon his head. "What can I possibly do for you?" cried I; "the way you are going on you will bring the kingdom to beggary. One would suppose that you fancied yourself sole master and disposer of all that the treasury contains."

Comte Jean easily perceived by the tone in which I spoke that some person was advising me in the affair, and his penetration easily pointed out the duc d'Aiguillon, whom he instantly attacked, and a quarrel followed, equalling in noisy recrimination and abuse the dispute with the abbé Terray. My brother-in-law, carried away by the impetuosity of his temper, reproached M. d'Aiguillon severely with what he termed his ingratitude; telling him that he owed his admission to the ministry entirely to him, and that he could as easily procure his expulsion when he thought proper; adding, that he had at that moment a nobleman in his eye, whom he had a great inclination to bring forward to replace him in his present post.

The duke easily perceived that he alluded to M. de Cossé, and fearing the influence which comte Jean might possess over me, he determined not to displease him by any further opposition. So the end of all these disputes was, that comte Jean continued to gamble as before, and his orders were duly honoured by the comptroller-general. Poor treasury!

CHAPTER XXI.

The king's *petits soupers*—Table talk—Conversation upon M. de Voltaire—The suicide—The glass of lemonade—The regent and his daughter—Anecdote of M. de Richelieu.

Louis XV. supped almost every evening in my apartments; from the moment of his entering my dining-room he laid aside his royal dignity, and appeared only as a pleasing and convivial companion. He possessed every qualification to fit him for adorning the social board, an easy and graceful manner, exquisite taste and style, and an ever ready attention to his guests; yet, spite of the endearing familiarity with which Louis XV. comported himself, those noblemen honoured by his invitation to the repast observed the most respectful reserve. The king would by no means have liked that they should treat him less ceremoniously than usual; and, although he was pleased to divest himself for a while of the ensigns of power and forget his rank, he did not wish that others should do so too.

At these *réunions* perfect ease and freedom prevailed, and both sexes were permitted to express their thoughts in language, which, if not restrained by the stern hand of etiquette, was yet regulated by the strictest propriety; I alone submitted to no dictates but those of inclination, and giving free vent to my natural vivacity, kept the king incessantly amused with the arch and lively piquancy of my remarks or replies: yet, greatly as my unstudied and open manners delighted the king, I am well assured he would not have tolerated them in any other female of the court.

We frequently had supper parties, at which the

number of guests varied from four to eight. I had one evening in particular assembled round my table his majesty, the prince de Soubise, the ducs de Duras and de Richelieu, with mesdames de Mirepoix and de Forcalquier. The king had returned from hunting with an excellent appetite, which was generally accompanied by an equally happy state of mind. The meal was kept alive by a continual shower of lively remarks, epigrams, and clever repartees. Not that my three male visitors were usually esteemed the wittiest men in the nation, but they had acquired a certain degree of confidence and tact from their association with good society which frequently passes for wit; besides, the gaiety of a prince is infectious, and, when once the monarch appears disposed to favour the merry mood, the courtiers vie with each other in attempts at mirth and cheerfulness. However, the noisy tone of our revelry became wearisome after a while, and Louis XV. wishing to give a more serious turn to the conversation, addressed the duc de Richelieu, saying,

"Have you received any letters lately from M. de Voltaire?"

"Yes, sire, I received one yesterday."

"Full of impiety, I suppose, as usual?" returned the king.

"Your majesty is right," answered M. de Richelieu; "instinct will prevail."

"You have a most celebrated friend in M. de Voltaire," said the prince de Soubise; "or at least one of whom the world talks a great deal."

"You are honoured by such a friendship, indeed," observed the king, "for you share it with two crowned heads."

"Why, as to that, sire," answered M. de Richelieu, "M. de Voltaire is too fickle to please the fair sex, and not sufficiently convivial to be a favourite with gentlemen."

"And yet," continued M. de Soubise, "your friend is a prodigious favourite with his majesty of Prussia,

who wishes him to write the history of his reign in the same style as that of *The Age of Louis XIV.*"

"It appears to me," resumed Louis XV., "that a French author might find sufficient employment without quitting his country."

"I am told," replied the duc de Richelieu, "that M. de Voltaire is at present writing *The Age of Louis XV.* as a continuation of that of Louis XIV."

"It forms part of his duty," answered the king; "he is my historiographer, and not that of Frederic II."

"His Prussian majesty," cried M. de Soubise, "is not sufficiently rich to have one; he therefore borrows those of the kings his neighbours, or, failing in that, becomes his own historiographer."

"A writer of such distinguished merit as M. de Voltaire," answered M. de Richelieu, "could not without dishonour employ his pen for hire in the service of an elector of Brandenburg. He should be occupied solely with writing the history of the first and finest kingdom in Europe."

"If it be to mine you accord that distinction," replied Louis XV., "I thank you for the compliment. You remind me of a certain pope, according to whom the kings of France were elevated above all other kings in the same proportion as the sun is placed above the stars in the firmament. But the importance of a crown cannot always amuse, and the possessor of 'the first kingdom in Europe' is very much troubled with ennui just now. Come, my lords, what shall we do after supper? play at cards? No! I think not; for thirty years' acquaintance with them has only proved that they too can be wearisome and fatiguing. Madame la comtesse," added he, turning towards me, "pray think of some new and agreeable pastime for this evening."

I reflected for a few minutes. "Sire," said I, "I have just thought of an idea from the *Arabian Nights*. Let each of your guests relate his history, or part of it, and your majesty will perhaps be pleased to follow the example."

My proposition was most favourably received by the king and all assembled. I requested M. de Soubise to commence; he did not require much solicitation, and I will endeavour to give his story as he related it.

"At twenty years of age I was possessed of a considerable share of personal attractions, with an air of polish and elegance seldom acquired so early in life. These advantages were placed in the most favourable light by the additional recommendation of a large fortune placed entirely at my own disposal. I had an eager desire to ruin myself, and my wishes were very speedily accomplished.

"I was not altogether displeasing to the fairer part of the creation; while, for my own part, I reserved my approbation for such among them as were endowed with the greatest portion of beauty; where that was to be met with I cared not whether the form which inflamed my susceptible heart were wrapped in velvet and ermine, or whether she for whom I sighed reposed her head beneath a palace or a cabin.

"My principal valet de chambre was a man named Bernard, who, spite of his subordinate situation, outdid in profligacy and wickedness the first lord of the kingdom. He often spoke to me in raptures of the beauty of one of his relations, a cousin I think; he described her as being lovely as an angel, but pure and immaculate as a vestal. He had spoken to her of love, but, spite of his profound knowledge and experience in such affairs, he had not been able to succeed; not that the fair one was inexorable, but she was prudent, and would hear of no lover who would not likewise become her husband; unfortunately Bernard was already married.

"When my unprincipled attendant perceived that the picture he had drawn of the beautiful Javotte Herbaut had caught my fancy, he said, 'My lord, if I were you (who, as every one knows, is the handsomest gentleman in the kingdom,) I would pay my court to this little prude; she would not have the heart to resist

you although she did me; you would be a successful wooer, and I should enjoy the consolation of having avenged her disdain.

"Bernard's suggestion pleased me; I was all anxiety to have an opportunity of contemplating the wonderful creature, of whose virtue I heard such an account; to have presented myself before her in all the splendour of my rank would have been impossible, nor would her parents, who were honest tradespeople in the rue St. Jacques, have suffered it. Bernard was a perfect adept in all the deceptions, disguises, and snares of intrigue; by his advice I dressed myself in a suit of my own livery, and accompanied him to the house of his uncle and aunt, to whom he presented me as second valet de chambre to the prince de Soubise, and his own particular friend. The worthy couple received me very cordially, and invited us both to their little parlour behind the shop: mademoiselle Javotte soon joined us, and I was immediately lost in the contemplation of her angelic countenance: her large blue eyes shone at once with sweetness and sense; her figure was light and delicate; all seemed perfection, from the light brown curl which played over her fair forehead, to the small and well-turned ancle which was occasionally displayed as, with unaffected ease and grace of movement, she busied herself in preparing our humble repast. In a few moments I was over head and ears in love, and even the modest and retiring glances of Javotte conveyed to me the certainty that I was not altogether disagreeable to her. To be brief, one interview followed another, and I soon found that the love I entertained for the interesting girl was abundantly repaid; but her parents spoke of marriage, a thing which (as you may imagine) was wholly out of my power to offer; I therefore sought to gain time by saying, that for the present it was a step I durst not venture upon, for fear of displeasing the prince, in whose service I had very lately entered. This excuse was received, and I permitted to visit Javotte as her acknowledged lover and future

husband. I did not lose the opportunity thus afforded me, but availing myself of the almost idolatrous feeling with which Javotte regarded me, obtained from her that surrender of her honour which Bernard had in vain sought to gain. The poor girl, whose tenderness of heart seemed wholly unable to resist the solicitations of those she loved, would one minute wring her hands in agony at her fall, and the next would throw herself imploringly on my shoulder, beseeching of me to satisfy her parents and herself, by fulfilling my promise of marrying her. I felt greatly embarrassed; for so earnest, so gentle, yet confiding, were the arguments and entreaties of Javotte, so little of selfishness was there in the manner with which she reproached herself alone for the error she had committed, that after having worshipped her with six months constant homage, I could hardly persuade myself to forsake her at last.

"At this period a new tragedy was being performed, the production of M. de Voltaire: it excited a general sensation throughout Paris, and among others the Herbaut family were desirous of witnessing it. I had been dining this day with M. de la Poplinière, and did not quit the table till a somewhat late hour. Not being able to return to Versailles, I went to finish the evening at the *Comédie Française*, where I first seated myself in a box with several gentlemen, and afterwards removed into that belonging to madame René. This was about the period of my passion for that lady.

"The following day Bernard entered my chamber in the utmost consternation.

"'For heaven's sake what has happened?' said I.

"'My lord, the most unfortunate thing.'

"'Speak; what has occurred?'

"'My cousin Javotte is here.'

"'What does she want?'

"'To see you, my lord. She recognised you last night at the theatre, and she vows she will not quit the house till she has spoken with you.'

"'Let her come in.'

"You must imagine, for I am unable to describe, the scene which followed; the tears and sobs of the heart-broken but still devoted Javotte; her mingled prayers, reproaches, and execrations. To me it became a matter of astonishment how one, hitherto so gentle and affectionate, could rise into such a storm of vehemence and despair. I did my utmost to restore peace to her troubled mind. Alas! she no longer heeded my vows of eternal love, and a glance of contempt was the only answer to my promises of splendidly providing for her.

"'Javotte,' cried I, at length, when my argumentative powers were exhausted, 'hear reason. What can I do to render you happy? what do you expect from me?'

"'That you should fulfil your solemn engagement of making me your wife.'

"The idea was ludicrous. The prince de Soubise select the daughter of a carpenter for the sharer of his rank and title! I really could not suppress a loud fit of laughter at the very supposition. My gaiety had an instantaneous effect on the grief of Javotte; her tears suddenly ceased flowing; she became calm, melancholy, and pensive; and, after remaining for some minutes buried in a profound reverie, she rose, and bidding me farewell with a look and voice of the most deadly despair, quitted my chamber.

"She had been gone about five minutes when I rang for Bernard. 'Follow your cousin,' cried I, 'and do not lose sight of her till you have seen her return to her own house.' Bernard obeyed, and arriving at the Pònt Neuf found his way impeded by a crowd which had just assembled, and were gazing with looks of horror over the parapet. He inquired the cause of this unusual bustle, and was informed that a young female had just thrown herself from the bridge into the water: a feeling he could scarcely define made Bernard force his way through the mass of spectators till he reached the centre of the Pont Neuf, when he perceived his ill-

fated cousin struggling with the current, which speedily swept her away to be seen no more. He called for assistance, and tried every means of saving her, but in vain. When he returned to me I was thunderstruck at the news; I had no idea of the extremities to which despair could drive a forsaken damsel. A few days afterwards Bernard solicited his discharge, which I willingly granted him; and I have never since heard anything of him or any of his family."

M. de Soubise was silent, nor did a sound escape from his auditors: for my own part I felt deeply touched with the sorrows of poor Javotte, and with my commiseration for her was mingled a sentiment of anger and contempt for the effrontery and indifference with which the prince had related so disgraceful a narration. How could he, with so much levity and unconcern, relate to us, that the victim of his seductive arts was driven by his neglect and perfidy to take refuge from the scorn of the world in the arms of a violent death? One would have imagined that so horrible a recollection would have been sufficient to have poisoned every hour of even the life of a courtier; but, in the old prince de Soubise half a century passed in intrigues, profligacy, and immorality, had deadened or extinguished every better feeling of his nature. I was just about to express the disgust with which his coldhearted insensibility inspired me, when madame de Mirepoix, divining my intention, hastened to interrupt my purpose, saying, "Now it is my turn; and I must forewarn my hearers that I too have a tragical story to relate.

"My first husband was the prince de Lixen, an excellent man in many respects, but one who entertained many singular ideas; and, among other strange fancies, wished to play the lover after two years of matrimony. By way of displaying my complaisance I feigned to believe him, although I knew but too well how entirely the affections of the traitor were occupied elsewhere: however, seeing no remedy for my misfortune, I determined to bear it with patience.

"I was looking for an eligible person as companion, and a lady was recommended to me of German extraction, of good family, and still handsome, although somewhat past the meridian of life; but, upon the whole, a pleasing and obliging sort of woman. I consulted the prince, who, with his usual gallantry, begged I would please myself, and I accordingly determined upon taking mademoiselle de Stakelburg. I had at first every reason for feeling satisfied with her kind and attentive behaviour, but after a time her manners, which were at first so affectionate and caressing, became gloomy, and her temper was subject to fits of irritation and melancholy. Her large eyes, formerly so dead and soulless, were suddenly lighted up with unwonted animation. I remarked too, that M. de Lixen was much more at home than usual, and all at once affected to admire and prefer all kinds of domestic occupations. I had many suspicions as to the cause of all these changes in my establishment, and doubt was speedily converted into certainty.

"I had occasion one evening to speak with mademoiselle Stakelburg, and imagining she might not yet have retired to rest, I went to her dressing-room in search of her; she was not there, and I proceeded to her sleeping-room, where I discovered my perfidious companion in her bed fast asleep, and on the same pillow was the head of my husband. Overcome with the double deceit practised on me, I burst into tears, but quickly recalling my senses, I extinguished my light that I might not awaken the guilty pair, and so give rise to a scene which would have revealed the secret of my wrongs to the whole house; I glided back to my own apartment.

"On the following morning my German friend and rival presented herself at breakfast, wholly unconscious of my nocturnal visit. When the meal was over, and the servants out of the way, I said to her,

"'Mademoiselle, you must immediately quit this house.'

" 'Have I then been so unfortunate as to displease you, madam?'

" 'Your offence,' answered I, 'does not consist in having displeased me but in having pleased my husband too well. I engaged you as my companion during the day, without making any stipulation for your becoming that of my husband during the night: this is really acting with too much zeal and activity in my family.'

" She wished to reply, and sought by every excuse to justify herself. 'Denials are in vain,' cried I; 'I have been an eye-witness to the facts I complain of. Let us avoid all scandal and exposure; if you really belong to a good family it will be injurious to you; and if you are a mere adventurer it will be to the disadvantage of your seducer. You shall remain here for a week; meanwhile let it be mentioned throughout the château that you are called home by your family; and now return to your chamber.'

" Two hours after this I received a note from M. de Lixen, saying that he was invited unexpectedly to join some friends in a hunting party, and should not be at home for ten days. I judged by this that mademoiselle had informed him of what had passed between her and me; and that, spite of his love, he was not sorry to avoid my presence for a few days.

" His accomplice was not so timid; she supported my presence with admirable intrepidity. The day following the sudden departure of M. de Lixen I chanced to be with her in the saloon; finding myself thirsty I rang for a glass of lemonade, which I placed upon a stand, over which was a large looking-glass. Just then I recollected having left a letter unsealed on my desk in the next room, and went for the purpose of despatching it; but, as I was about to rise from the writing-table with it in my hand, I accidentally cast my eyes upon a glass so placed as to correspond exactly with the one near which I left my lemonade, and by its aid I saw distinctly my amiable friend in the saloon rise

from her work, look timidly around, and then drawing a small phial from her bosom, and pouring some drops into my glass of lemonade, return quietly and resume her place at her tambour-frame. I remained watching the mirror which had revealed to me so horrible a design in mute astonishment and surprise. I could not for a moment doubt that the wretch intended to administer poison. What should I do? To expose her guilt would be to involve my husband, who, I felt assured, was innocent of the murderous attempt.

"At length I returned to the saloon; the abandoned woman was working calmly and steadily. Advancing towards her with the lemonade in my hand, I exclaimed, 'Allow me to present you with this glass of lemonade, mademoiselle; I trust you will not refuse to drink it to my health.' At these words she rose and advanced a few steps, as though to take the glass from my hand, but ere she could grasp it she fell fainting on the floor. I rang for assistance, and she was carried to her chamber, but you may depend upon it she did not sleep that night under my roof."

This story did not afford us any particular amusement; and we could not help observing, that the maréchale, who had passed so many years at court, and had mixed in such a variety of scenes, might have related to us something more entertaining.

"A very excellent story, and extremely well told, madame la maréchale," cried Louis XV., yawning frightfully; "but suppose we vary our subject. Come, Richelieu, it is your turn."

"Sire," replied the duke, "I am for the comic strain. Will your majesty be pleased to hear an adventure which belongs properly to the legends of gallantry?"

"Willingly," answered the king; "when your grace is at once the hero and narrator."

"But what if the heroine were a noble lady, distantly related to your majesty?"

"The lady, I presume, no longer exists?"

"No, sire; she has been long dead."

"In that case speak freely; we are bound only to respect the living, as your friend M. de Voltaire observes."

The duke then proceeded as follows:—

"In my youth I possessed, as well as M. de Soubise, a face and figure which the ladies (God bless them) were pleased to admire, perhaps more than they deserved. Like M. de Soubise also I was a general admirer of all the lovely blooming countenances I met with, whether encountered in the gilded chambers of the great, or seen issuing from the mud cottage of poverty. So, having been blinded by the bright eyes of the regent's daughter, I made known my passion, and was soon a thriving wooer. I could not have disposed of my heart to better advantage, and had marriage been proposed to me, I should not, like M. de Soubise, have driven my mistress to distraction by a refusal; but, as I could not, for state reasons, play the part of a husband, I was compelled to enact that of a lover, a character which, however delightful to sustain, was not without its dangers. Spite of my stratagems, my artifices, and disguises, our amour was discovered. Great was the paternal rage of the regent, whose excessive tenderness and zeal for his daughter's happiness made him determined to put an end to my happiness; still he treated me fairly and nobly, indeed he was an excellent prince."

"You are right," said Louis XV., "and an honest man likewise, the proof of which is, that although there was no one between him and the throne but myself, still I have lived to ascend it. Public malice and private slander have greatly calumniated him."

"His royal highness," continued M. de Richelieu, "sent for me into his cabinet, addressed to me a most severe lecture, but couched in general terms, and without mentioning his daughter. I easily divined the drift of his reprimand, although I feigned entire ignorance on the subject; taking refuge, therefore, in

a most respectful astonishment, I protested my utter inability to comprehend how I had had the misfortune to incur his displeasure.

" 'Tis well, sir,' returned the prince severely, 'but be circumspect for the future, or you will draw down the most terrible punishment on your head.'

" Anger sparkled in his eye, and his voice sounded terrifically in my ear. I fully perceived the dangers to which I should expose myself by persisting in my intimacy with the princess, but upon my return home I found a letter from her. We had not met for several days, and the letter, which accused me of coldness and neglect, contained an earnest request that I would be at the palais-royal on the following day, as her father would be out hunting.

" The princess occasionally took lessons from an old Spanish musician, named signor Gabalda; this personage generally wore a black wig, a large hat flapped over his eyes, and a huge mantle which concealed the whole of his figure. You may guess who this signor Gabalda really was, and it was under the costume which had so frequently befriended me, that I repaired to the palais-royal. I reached the apartment of the princess without hinderance or molestation. Scarcely had we given vent to the first burst of tender joy, when we heard a key turn in the lock of a private door; it opened, and the regent stood before us. I seized my guitar, and my pupil her music-book; we both attempted to sing, but terror deprived each of us of our voice. The prince approached his daughter without appearing to notice me. The poor young lady, by way of relieving the awkward silence which prevailed, said, in a faint voice,

" 'I thought, my dear father, you were out hunting.'

" 'I was upon the point of so doing," replied he, sternly, 'but particular business keeps me at home.'

" 'Gabalda,' said the princess, addressing herself to me, 'retire into the adjoining apartment, I will inform you when I am at leisure to resume my lesson.'

"I was about to obey her, but the regent motioned me to stay.

"'This person,' said he, fixing his deep and inquiring eyes on his trembling daughter, 'is your instructor on the guitar.'

"'He is sir,' replied she.

"Then turning towards me, the prince demanded,

"'From whence are you?'

"'From Seville, your highness,' answered I, bowing low.

"'Your age?'

"'Sixty years.'

"'How long have you been in Paris?'

"'From the year 1660, when the Infanta Maria Theresa came to espouse Louis XIV.'

"'Your profession?'

"'Formerly a soldier, but now a musician at your highness's command.'

"'The fellow has some wit,' continued the regent, 'what a pity that he should be such a daring liar.'

"'Your highness, I am a gentleman.'

"'A gentleman! no! no! you forget, you are a teacher of the guitar, that is your present protection.' Then fixing a stern look on his daughter he exclaimed, 'Mademoiselle, do you love the duc de Richelieu?'

"'My dear father——'

"'Do you love him? I ask, answer yes or no.'

"'Alas, my dear father,' cried the princess, 'what is it you mean?'

"'Yes or no? I ask once more.'

"'Oh, my father, forgive me,' faintly murmured the young lady, 'I do love him.'

"'Well then, if you do love him, it depends upon you to save his life, and unless you give me your solemn promise never to see him more, in less than a quarter of an hour you shall behold his corpse; I have close by four determined men, who only wait my bidding. He took one step towards the door, when the princess, filled with terror, threw herself at his feet, and pro-

nounced with many sobs, the vow which banished me for ever from her sight; when she had concluded, her father raised her saying,

" 'Tis well, my daughter, remember, I rely upon your promise; should you break it, both you and your lover would dearly repent it. As for you, signor musician, you are at liberty to depart, but never let me hear of you for the future. Here end the life and adventures of signor Gabalda.'

" I made a respectful bow, and retired full of grief and consternation from a scene in which I had acted so disastrous a part."

" And did you never again behold mademoiselle de Valois ?" inquired I.

" That, madam," replied he, " is a secret, and since his majesty nominated me minister of state I have learned discretion."

This relation had greatly interested all the auditory. M. de Richelieu possessed an inimitable talent for relating the gallant adventures of his early youth. He threw into them so much energy, vivacity, enthusiasm, and lively colouring, his memory was so excellent, and furnished him with such an exactitude of time and place, that his recitals had all the charm of reality and were brought immediately before the mind's eye.

There still remained four persons (including the king) to relate their stories. Madame de Forcalquier was selected to succeed the duc de Richelieu. She declared that she could recollect nothing worthy of being listened to from the circumstances of her own life, and would, therefore, borrow a scene from the history of a friend of hers. The following chapter contains the incident she selected for our amusement.

CHAPTER XXII.

The sylph of madame de Forcalquier—Ghost story—Conversation upon the comte de St. Germain—Bon mot of the duc de Duras—His memory fails him—Two stories wanting—The lieutenant of police—Various intrigues in favour of the duc de Choiseul—Correspondence of the dauphiness.

"A FEMALE friend of mine," said madame de Forcalquier, "was passing the summer with her mother-in-law, in a château situated in Auvergne. This château stood in the most wild and retired part of the province, and they had many more wolves than neighbours to enliven the scene. My friend had ample leisure for finding out all the delights of this place during the frequent absences of her husband, who spent the greater part of each year with his regiment, either in actual service or in garrison. This state of widowhood, far from rendering the poor lady more reconciled to her gloomy residence, increased her ardent desire to emancipate herself. One day, upon her return to her chamber, she found upon her dressing-table a sealed note, addressed to herself. The handwriting was in the lightest and most delicate style; it came from an aërial correspondent—a spirit—a sylph, who informed her that he loved her with a most tender passion, and placed his whole happiness in finding it reciprocal. He was, he said, the gentle breath of the spring, which sported with the ringlets of her hair; the perfume of the flower she delighted in; the butterfly which fluttered around her. Long time had he repressed his fervent admiration within the bounds of respectful silence, but its violence no longer permitting his imposing any further restraint, he was compelled to reveal it. He concluded by imploring a return of his passion, and signed himself her celestial admirer,—Zaloé.

"I must leave you to imagine all that passed in the mind of the astonished lady as she perused this mysterious billet. However, as she mused over its tender contents, a sweet reverie took possession of her senses; it was the commencement of a romance as novel as enchanting. At once curious and subdued, she determined to let the adventure proceed; to her it seemed the signal for breaking her present bondage, and she hailed the hopes of freedom which seemed ready to burst upon her by the aid of that unseen admirer, who was at once the breath of zephyr, the perfumed flower, and the sportive butterfly.

"Upon the approach of night, my friend, anxious to retrace on her pillow the sweet images conjured up by the morning's adventure, bade an early adieu to her mother-in-law, the old curate, and worthy *bailli*, and retired to her chamber. But sleep forsook her eyes, and the striking of the midnight hour by the great castle clock found her still pressing a wakeful pillow. One o'clock sounded ere the eyes of my thoughtful friend had closed in forgetfulness, and as the sound reechoed through the lofty pile, a sweet and delicious perfume, as of the most fragrant roses, filled the apartment. The lady in the utmost emotion started from her couch, for she did not misunderstand the indication of the sylph's approach. Just then, a faint sigh, which seemed to her heated imagination as partaking of all the harmony of the spheres, sounded as though close beside her; doubt was at an end, her lover Zaloé was at hand. Before she had had time to call up one sentiment of alarm or terror, a second sigh softer and gentler even than the preceding one was heard, and a sweet, plaintive voice murmured out 'Aline,' (the name of my friend.) This was repeated a second and third time in a tone of passionate tenderness. The lady, thus addressed, knew nôt what to reply. A sort of superstitious terror mingled with her emotions, and deprived her of the power of utterance. Again, after a minute's interval, the voice again called upon Aline with a timid

earnestness. My friend, at length, assumed sufficient courage to reply.

"'Who calls Aline? and wherefore?'

"'A being who adores you,' replied the sylph, 'who asks some little indulgence for an excessive love.'

"You may readily suppose," continued madame de Forcalquier, with a significant smile, "that a conversation commenced under circumstances so tender, was not speedily ended. It lasted, indeed, until morning, and was recommenced on the following night; indeed, such was the effect it produced on the mind of my friend, that the old castle lost a considerable part of its gloom, and the husband of flesh and blood might, with just cause, have been jealous of the aërial being who occupied his place during the night, but disappeared with the first dawn of day. The conditions upon which Zaloé bound himself to return were, that she should by no means endeavour to see him; that imprudent gratification once obtained, she would lose him for ever. The lady submitted to this restriction very patiently for a week, but at the end of that time, the seneschal, one of the most attentive guests the château could boast of, fell ill, and the lady of the castle fancied that she might, in her afternoon's walk, call upon so grave a personage without compromising her dignity. Her mother-in-law accompanied her to the invalid, who was listening to a young man, who read to him the prayers of the day. Imagine the surprise of my friend when she recognised in the reader, who was introduced as the son of the seneschal, Zaloé, the sylph. The young man at sight of her was struck dumb with confusion, and hastily putting aside his book, quitted the room. He returned again as usual to the apartment of Aline at the midnight hour, but timid and embarrassed; indeed I was not less so myself."—

"How," cried the king, "yourself? and what were you doing there, madam? Ah! I see now; we can pretty well guess who your friend was."

We all laughed heartily at the involuntary confession

madame de Forcalquier had made. She was at first deeply embarrassed at her own imprudence; but recovering herself, she said,

"Well, I will not deny my words. Yes, sire; yes, ladies and gentlemen, I was the lady of the château who found relief from its monotony in the company and conversation of the sylph. The son of the seneschal had read the tale of *Gabalis*, and the poor youth, who would never have presumed to appear at the château during the day, had adopted the expedient to procure his admission during the night. When forced to confess my knowledge of who he really was, I warmly blamed his presumption; however, the charm was broken; the son of the seneschal was a very different person to Zaloé the sylph, and I forbade his ever appearing before me again. Nevertheless I thought it a duty to interest myself in his favour; and, at my request, he was taken under the patronage of one of my relations, who received him into his own regiment, and gradually promoted him, till he is at present captain of a troop."

"I am pleased to learn," said the king, "that the inhabitants of Sylphiria are willing to bear arms in my service. You shall introduce this friend of yours to my notice, madame de Forcalquier; and so that he be but of gentle blood, he shall be presented with the command of a regiment."

"He can be ennobled any day your majesty pleases," replied madame de Forcalquier; "M. de Hazier will find him the finest genealogical tree possible."

The king did not seem very much to like this last observation, he therefore abruptly changed the subject; and, instead of calling upon the duc de Duras to relate his story, he commenced his own as follows:—

"You all know the comte de St. Germain?" A reply in the affirmative (in which, however, I did not join) was returned by the persons assembled round the table. "The comte de St. Germain," pursued he, "was a very extraordinary man, who had seen many

singular things, and said much less than he knew upon any subject. One evening that he was supping with me at the house of madame de Pompadour, he related the following anecdote, for the authenticity of which he pledged himself."

The king, as he said these words, seated himself in a convenient position for telling his tale, which he forewarned us would be long; he hesitated some minutes, as though he strove to impress a due solemnity on our minds by the awfulness of the silence with which he preceded his recital. I was fully prepared (from his grave and sombre manner) for one of those gloomy ghost stories he was almost as fond of as he was of tales of gallantry. At length he began.

"The comte de St. Germain was travelling in Bohemia; night surprised him not far from Prague; and, to add to his misfortune, a wheel of his carriage having come off, he was under the necessity of seeking some place of shelter for the night. Looking around he perceived the turrets of a castle, and directing his steps towards it, he requested hospitality for the night. He was informed that he was welcome to all the place afforded, but the master of it being confined to his chamber by indisposition, he must have the kindness to pardon any apparent lack of attention. However, the maître d'hotel introduced him to the chamber of the baron, whom he found a handsome, dignified-looking man, of about thirty years of age, but grave, melancholy, and ceremonious; his sleeping apartment, in which he was sitting, was entirely hung with black, and resembled a chamber of death. The bed was of black velvet, trimmed with deep silver fringes, whilst over the top waved a funereal plume of white feathers. A large crystal lustre depending from the ceiling of the room was filled with large tapers, which threw a sickly and deathlike glare over this singular place. Comte de St. Germain looked at all this with a deep and serious attention; and, after attentively examining the features of his host, he took his hand, as if to surprise

his most secret thoughts, and said, 'Your excellency's heart is more the seat of disease than your body; I have from my youth devoted my attention to extraordinary cures, and I flatter myself I could most successfully undertake yours if you would commit yourself to my care.'

"The master of the château smiled with an expression of proud incredulity, and bowing slightly, he observed that his malady was incurable. The count became more earnest on the subject, made known his name and rank, and obtained the entire confidence of the young baron, who explained to him, that having been left an orphan with a considerable fortune, he had fallen in love with the daughter of his notary; and, forgetful of all heraldic laws, wished to make her his wife. Spite of all the representations of his family he espoused the young female alluded to by a sort of left-handed marriage; but on the first night of his nuptials, as he was about to lie his head on his pillow, a sepulchral voice sounded in his ears, 'Beware! your crime is as yet but one of ignorance; go pass this night in prayer, and to-morrow search in the tower of archives, beneath the twelfth iron chest on the left hand you will find some papers which will reveal to you a horrible secret.'

"After these words the voice was silent, and the astonished baron hastily summoned his attendants; but after the most rigid scrutiny the events of the evening remained concealed in the darkest mystery.

"The baron concealed from his lady (who had heard nothing of the fearful warning) the alarm he had experienced, and began at length to persuade himself it had been merely some illusion of the senses. On the following day the bustle and rejoicings incident upon his marriage entirely banished all recollection of the injunction he had received to visit the archives of his château. A week passed away in all the delights of fêtes, festivities, paying and receiving visits, &c., when, on the ninth day, a Friday, he was sitting, about eleven o'clock in the morning, in his cabinet, writing a letter

to a friend then in Italy. A knocking was heard at the door; 'Come in,' said the baron. A man entered at his bidding, dressed in a long black robe trimmed with ermine, a small black velvet scull-cap covered his head, his countenance was pale and inexpressive, and his eyes were fixed, glassy, and motionless; he rather glided than walked, and the baron, whose attention appeared to be involuntarily attracted towards this singular visitor, recognised his features with horror for those of an ancient keeper of archives, who had been dead more than two centuries, and whose portrait, similarly attired, still adorned the walls of the picture-gallery. The then proprietor of the château had caused it to be painted as a reward for his devotion to the family.

"This extraordinary being approached the baron, holding in his gloved hands a bundle of papers, which he placed on a table, bowed profoundly, and quitted the room without uttering a word, leaving after him an odour as if from a charnel-house.

"The baron, immovable with terror, felt a return of the cold shudder which had frozen up his veins on the night of his marriage, and again he fancied he heard the horrid warning which then rung in his ears. At length, with a desperate courage, he resolved to examine the papers which had so strangely and mysteriously found their way into his possession. Their contents were the very climax of horror: he had become the husband of his own sister, the natural child of his father and the sister of the notary's wife, who had consented to feign a pregnancy to deceive her husband as well as the rest of the world, and so save her sister's honour. Several facts and registers proved the authenticity of this fatal story, and the wretched baron could no longer doubt the truth of it.

"At that moment the young baroness entered the room: surprised at the paleness and agitation of her husband, she flew to him, and by her fond caresses sought to draw from him the cause of it, or at least to destroy its effects; but, with a fearful cry, the unhappy

baron repulsed her attentions, and even shrunk from her with every sign of dislike and terror.

"The tears and prayers of the baroness brought on a new scene: she insisted upon knowing the reason of this species of madness. The mysterious words which escaped the baron made her still more desirous of being fully acquainted with the evil, be it what it might. Alas! there was no possibility of concealing it from her. She listened to the horrid tale with the most despairing calmness, and was led to her chamber, which she never more quitted; a rapid decline putting an end to her life and miseries at the expiration of a month.

"Her husband and brother passed in prayers the first night of his widowhood. He was thus engaged when he heard a step behind him; he turned and saw his wife, clad in the vestments of the grave, come and place herself on her knees beside him: she neither spoke nor looked at him; her lips alone appeared to move, and added a more awful expression to her countenance. This scene lasted from midnight till the clock struck one, when she rose and slowly retired. A year had nearly elapsed since this dreadful event, and every night at the same hour it was repeated.

"The comte de St. Germain listened with imperturbable calmness to this singular narration. When the young baron ceased speaking, he said,

"'Has your excellency ever inquired of the deceased what she requires you to do? or what are her reasons for these nocturnal visits?'

"'No, my lord,' replied the afflicted husband, 'I have never presumed to interrogate her.'

"'Have you ever requested any person to remain with you during the period she is accustomed to appear?'

"'Never.'

"'Well, then, permit me to pass this night with you. I have good reasons for supposing I may be serviceable to you.'

" The baron, overcome by the fame and reputation of M. de St. Germain, consented. The count caused a casket, which he always carried with him, to be brought, took from it certain herbs and perfumed the chamber. Midnight struck; the door opened; and the count, although he could perceive nothing, heard distinctly the rustling of a winding-sheet: he was sensible likewise of a slight vacillation in the flame of the tapers; and, to his great surprise, an arm-chair appeared to move of its own accord, and place itself beside that of the baron, who, upon a sign from M. de St. Germain, questioned the phantom, which was visible to his eye alone. A voice replied, that his wife was destined to be his nightly companion until he descended with her into the tomb, but that he would see her only twenty-one nights more; that period being the termination of his stay in this world. The voice ceased, and the comte de St. Germain, struck with awe and surprise, placed himself on his knees, and began likewise to address his prayers to God until, at one o'clock, the spectre departed according to custom.

" The count knew not what to think of the scene he had just witnessed, whilst the baron, grateful to know the time of his earthly trials was so nearly expired, prayed of the traveller to pass with him those three weeks which still separated him from the friendly grave. The count consented.

" ' I endeavoured,' said the count, ' by the aid of my most powerful elixirs to preserve his life, but in vain, and the twenty-first evening I saw my unfortunate friend breathe his last. A few instants before he expired he whispered to me, that his wife and the keeper of the archives were both waiting in the room to take his spirit with them.' "

The king here terminated his recital.

" Mercy upon me, sire!" exclaimed I, " what a horrible tale you have chosen to enliven us with. I can assure you I feel the same cold shudder the poor baron complained of. Your friend comte de St. Germain was

a sad fabricator of falsehoods, if he pretended such a frightful story really did happen."

"Pray be careful what you say of him," replied the maréchale de Mirepoix, "I know the count well myself; he is a most singular personage; I can assure you one who appears to have been in existence when Solomon's temple stood."

"And danced with David before the ark, no doubt," cried M. de Duras.

"Duc de Duras," exclaimed the king, in a serious tone of voice, "nothing impious, if you please. You are not now supping with the baron d'Holbech; you know, too, how little I am of a philosopher."

"Pardon me, sire," replied the first gentleman in waiting, "if I do forget it sometimes: your majesty has so much philosophy, that——"

"Not badly turned, my lord duke," said I, seeing that he was about to lose himself in an endless strain of compliment: "but your history, if you please; it is now your turn."

"Indeed, madam, I am pained to refuse, but I cannot recollect one circumstance worthy of your attention."

"How, my lord!" said Louis XV., "will you be the only person in company who refuses to bear part in the evening's amusement?"

"Indeed, sire, my memory refuses to aid me; but if your majesty insists upon it, I will invent something to relate."

"Invent!" replied the king. "No, my friend; I have too much regard for you to require such an effort of your genius; so you shall stand excused for this evening."

It now became my turn; and, I must confess, I was no less embarrassed than my worthy companion in misfortune, the duc de Duras. The king, who frequently loved a good-natured laugh at my expense, inquired, whether I too were compelled to draw upon my imagination for a story. This question piqued me, and I replied,

"No, sire, I shall tell my tale as well as the rest of the company, and if it wearies you it is your fault and not mine; for I do not profess to be on a par with so many clever personages, in comparison with whom I am but a poor ignoramus."

"I, for one, deny any claim to a share in your flattering compliment, madam," said the duc de Richelieu.

"And yet you are one of the members of the French academy," answered I.

"I have indeed that honour, madam," said he, "that I may not reject the inheritance of my great uncle, or, rather, the forty have nominated him in me."

This reply served to turn the king's thoughts from the recollection of my story to the better amusement of rallying the duc de Duras, who, without possessing either personal or hereditary claims, had great hopes of being elected president. Madame de Forcalquier took part in the discussion, and I readily allowed the conversation to become generally engrossed, without reminding the company that I had not contributed my history to the general fund of entertainment, so that you will not be fatigued with what would infallibly have proved the two least entertaining stories of the night.

These suppers possessed an infinite attraction; a well-filled board, and the gayest yet most decent wit presided there: it was the hour for friendly converse, and one for obtaining from the monarch that which he would have unhesitatingly refused if solicited at a less propitious moment. But these suppers were equally fatal to all those persons who had made themselves obnoxious for any cause to those assembled; the opportunity thus afforded of injuring them in the opinion of the sovereign was so industriously employed, that the offending parties were lost beyond a hope of redemption; and one of the greatest helps towards the disgrace of the duc de Choiseul was his refusing to attend them, that he might not be compelled to endure my presence likewise. I shall ever regret these de-

lightful repasts. How very far are the grave and formal assemblies of the present day from equalling these charming parties. Now-a-days cheerful conversation is at an end, and dry gloomy discussion has taken its place. During the last four or five years politics have swallowed up every other topic. May heaven grant, for the sake of our grandchildren, that the present state of things may soon give place to those happier days I so justly deplore.

I spoke just now of the duc de Choiseul, concerning whom I will relate an incident, which would have considerably augmented the disagreeableness of his situation with any other antagonist than myself. I have told you that madame de Grammont had returned to Paris under pretext of arranging her affairs, but, in reality, for two reasons; the one, because her sister-in-law could no longer endure her violent and overbearing disposition; and the second, in the hopes of exciting a fresh cabal, to procure a restoration of that favour for herself and brother, which an ambitious mind like hers could never believe for ever lost. She was received with open arms; Paris vied in fêtes and entertainments given in honour of her, and nothing was to be heard of but the acts and deeds of madame de Grammont.

The lieutenant of police called upon me about this time.

"Strange things are passing just now," said he; "the sister of M. de Choiseul is busily employed sowing the seeds of dissention. She is exciting the court against the minister, and has already secured the services of the parliamentarians: she has even had two secret audiences of the dauphiness, whom she visited the first time disguised as a dealer in cast-off wardrobes, and the second time dressed as a German peasant. I am assured that some treason is in contemplation."

"Monsieur de Sartines," said I to him, "your attention is praiseworthy, but do not trouble the king with these follies. We must allow the defeated party

the trifling gratification of gossiping and inventing schemes and projects which are born and die in an antechamber. What can the duchesse de Grammont or her party do against the king?"

"Nothing, certainly, madam; but her cabals, as they are principally directed against you, may be found injurious to yourself, or else why these interviews with her royal highness?"

"She flatters herself, by the aid of this princess, to bring back her brother to the head of affairs, but she reckons without her host; and the dauphin will never pardon the duc de Choiseul for having been the enemy of his august father."

I at length persuaded the lieutenant of police not to mention the affair to the king. These intrigues were insupportable to me, and I wished for nothing more than to come to a trial of pretensions with the dauphiness, but then I desired to do so fairly and honourably, and not by mutual annoyances and retaliations. I concluded the affair was at an end, when one day the king entered my apartment; his manner was angry and disturbed, although I perceived at a glance that I did not come in for a share of his ill humour; I therefore ventured to inquire the cause of his chagrin.

"I have but too just grounds for it," said he; "very unpleasant things are passing around me; for ever and for ever am I tormented with intrigues and cabals."

"You are," replied I, "a most unreasonable prince if you would expect the people at Versailles to remain passive and inactive. Can you suppose they will remain mute and motionless, waiting, with folded arms, till you shall be pleased to exalt their merit?"

"I am not speaking of my courtiers," replied he; but I know that the dauphiness both receives and answers the letters of the duc de Choiseul, and that the duchesse de Grammont is the active Iris who conducts the correspondence."

"Upon my word," cried I, indignantly, "those who torment you with such idle tales are nothing better than

downright mischief-makers. Has M. de Sartines been silly enough?"

"No," returned the king; "I am apprized of it by a person in the service of the dauphiness, and it is through her intervention that the letter I have here fell into my hands."

He then gave me a letter addressed to the duc de Choiseul, in which her royal highness promised to use her utmost influence to procure him one day a worthy return for all his loyal services. "I shall never forget," continued she, "that I am indebted to you for the happiness of having known and visited France, and I long to evince my gratitude in deeds as well as words. My mother unites with me in all I have said."

This latter phrase most sensibly wounded the king, by proving that the dauphiness kept up a secret and regular correspondence with the empress; for in those letters which were suffered to appear M. de Choiseul's name had never been mentioned since his exile. The king, truly irritated and annoyed, informed me that he had resolved upon removing M. de Choiseul to Languedoc, and desiring madame de Grammont to follow him thither; but I may boast of having checked this first burst of anger, and I sought to appease the king at first by affecting to share his displeasure, and afterwards by bringing him round insensibly to a more indulgent disposition, till he promised me to leave things as they were; but he could not deny himself the pleasure or forwarding the letter according to its address, with a postscript written by himself in the following terms:—

"You are well aware of the just cause I have for feeling dissatisfied with your conduct, do not therefore provoke my just anger. I forbid a continuation of a correspondence which will, if persevered in, compel me to treat you with the utmost rigour."

These terrible words were a thunderstroke to the duc de Choiseul. Shortly after, madame de Grammont received secret orders to quit Paris and rejoin her family.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The baroness de New—k—Sagacity of comte Jean—The duc de Duras wishes to introduce a new mistress—Conversation with the maréchale de Mirepoix—Louis XV. acts disingenuously—The comte d'Hargicourt—Letter from the baroness de New—k—A party is formed against her.

The dauphiness was not long in discovering that the king was aware of her being in correspondence with the disgraced minister. In vain did she seek to find out the person who had betrayed her secret. I knew very well who it was, although the king had not informed me, and I made the discovery useful to my plans, without permitting it to go any further. The princess was deeply annoyed at the accident, and, unable to find out the author of it, vented all her rage upon me. A complete outcry was raised against me; and the three princesses, with the dauphiness, inveighed most bitterly against my manners, conduct, dress, expenses; nothing escaped their criticism, and most particularly did they exclaim at my extravagance in building a country house in the environs of Versailles. It is true, that at first I laughed at all these impotent attempts at injuring me; still I have no doubt, but by dint of continual annoyances, my enemies would have rendered me as ill-natured and vindictive as they were themselves had I remained much longer at Versailles. My sisters-in-law had their share in my torment, and above all, mademoiselle de Fumel, who deafened me with her complaints, until at last I said to her husband, "My good sir, I never meet your wife without feeling assured of being thrown into low spirits for the whole of the day."

She was a person neither handsome nor agreeable, who would have passed through the world without exciting the smallest notice, had she not been gifted with a large fortune and an illustrious birth. Her husband was a merry creature, whose *embonpoint* bespoke a jovial and facetious temperament; his wit consisted in a ready and boisterous laugh, which he introduced upon all occasions; his sensibility was composed of a long list of shrugs and grimaces, and his sense was principally evinced by his remaining silent when he could not conveniently have borne his part in the conversation: his virtues were all of the negative kind, and he was known by the surname of the "Good Man," merely because he was neither my husband nor comte Jean. His unaffected disposition greatly pleased me, and I should have seen him more frequently but for his better half, who was a perfect fury.

The comte d'Hargicourt (for it was thus he styled himself after having been known by the appellation of the chevalier and marquis du Barri,) went his way through the world honestly and inoffensively, making no enemies if he formed no friends. I, however, esteemed him greatly, and raised him to the rank of colonel without his ever having smelled powder; he required nothing more than my favour and interest to procure his advancement, and I only waited the convenient moment for procuring him the title of marshal of France. He said to me one day, as we were walking at Choisy,

"Pray, sister, do you kno wthe baroness de New—k?"

"No, I do not," answered I.

"You knew her at least formerly," said he, "under her first name of madame Pater."

"Oh, yes! I recollect," said I; "she is very beautiful. And where did you meet with her!"

"At the house of the duc de Duras, where she is a frequent visitor."

"And do you visit her at her own house?"

"Certainly."

"In that case," replied I, "her second husband has

not the jealousy of her former one, who used to get rid of the crowd of admirers who fluttered about her, by saying, 'Gentlemen, my house cannot possibly be to your ideas, for I am old-fashioned enough to keep my wife company both by day and night; consequently your services can be dispensed with.'"

This madame Pater, since baroness de New—k, really possessed an uncommon share of beauty; and had her mind but equalled her beauty, she might have seen the whole court at her feet; but, without being wholly destitute of sense, she had not the sort that was admired in France. Cold, taciturn, and haughty, she seemed to think universal homage her right and claim; and her repulsive manners kept back those whom her beauty had attracted. Her former husband had shown himself jealous and mistrustful, but the baron de New—k, more politic, kept at a distance, and by no means objected to the arrival of any signal piece of good fortune, however attributable to the charms of his wife, who, during her first marriage, had moved in a sort of sphere where we had frequently met; however, I had long lost sight of her, and should have forgotten her altogether had not the enthusiasm with which she had inspired my brother-in-law brought her back to my recollection. I learned from the same channel that the baroness de New—k made many inquiries respecting me, and was very anxious to learn every particular she could glean concerning me; and poor d'Hargicourt was but too happy to be furnished with a topic upon which he could converse.

He was extolling the beauty of his beloved baroness when comte Jean joined us, and began complaining to his brother of his having neglected him greatly of late. D'Hargicourt made the best excuse he could recollect just then, and took leave of us.

"You must not be surprised at the frequent absence of d'Hargicourt," said I to comte Jean, "the poor fellow is in love."

"In love!" repeated comte Jean. "Not with his wife, I trust."

"No, no," cried I; "such a failing does not belong to your family, but with the baroness de New—k—the late madame Pater. He has become acquainted with her at the house of the duc de Duras, where she had talked to him greatly respecting us, and most particularly has been very minute in her inquiries respecting me."

At these latter words I saw the forehead of my brother-in-law darken over with frowns; he folded his arms, and began to pace the room with rapid strides; then coming opposite to where I sat, he said,

"And is it possible that you do not see the drift of all this?"

"Bless me, comte Jean," said I, smiling, "what has your sagacity discovered now?"

"Oh, nothing," replied he, with an air of importance; "a mere trifle; only the duc de Duras wishes to poach on our manor. The baroness de New—k is an artful creature, who is making a tool of that poor silly dupe d'Hargicourt. But you warn me in time, and I am ready to receive the enemy."

The air of mock heroics with which comte Jean uttered these last words had well nigh produced a return of my mirth; however, a suspicion of evil arose from the concluding expression, and I saw in a minute to what he alluded.

"Are we then deceived?" cried I. "Ah! I begin to comprehend the danger. Yes, yes, my dear duke, you shall pay for this; I will tear out your perfidious eyes the first time I see your dissembling face."

"Have a care, my dear sister," replied comte Jean; "there may possibly be no truth in all our suspicions; let us go to work gently, and not spoil every thing by an ill-judged impetuosity. Just let d'Hargicourt fall into the snare without warning him of it, his straight forward uprightness would ruin every thing; but we may carry on our schemes under his colours."

"And how so?" inquired I.

"As follows," replied comte Jean: "the valet de chambre of my brother is as great a villain as ever served a nobleman; I will give him his choice of two hundred louis or the walls of Bicêtre: this alternative will bind him to me body and soul. I shall direct him to feign a passion for the baroness's femme de chambre, even though she should be a hundred years of age. We must procure, through her means, the key of madame de New—k's secretaire, and we shall no doubt be then enabled to form our opinions with more certainty."

"My dear count," said I, "are you thinking of what you are about? you are proposing a complete ambush."

"Only a countermine, my dear sister; I will suffer no interlopers, my good sister; our present situation is too enviable a one. Ask madame de Mirepoix what she thinks of it. Do you remain perfectly quiet and passive; receive the duc de Duras as usual; treat him with kindness, nay, distinction, if you please: let him be an ingrate in anticipation."

I could not endure such a deliberate piece of dissimulation; but so well did the count work upon my fears, by representing the danger we were incurring, that I consented to his acting as he thought proper.

A few minutes after the count had quitted me the maréchale de Mirepoix arrived: she found me still visibly agitated, and demanded the cause.

"I am very unhappy," replied I; "I detest a person, and yet I am strictly enjoined to receive him with all the smooth policy of a regular courtier."

"Mercy upon me, my dear!" returned the maréchale, "how you talk: why, have you not yet learned to practise deceit without an effort? Alas! we do not live in the days of innocence, but in the iron age, and moreover at court. But who has offended you? tell me who is the unfortunate object of your displeasure?"

"I have been desired not to name him, but still I must tell you, for that will give me an opportunity of

of speaking of him as he deserves, although I dare not use my nails in disfiguring his face. The traitor is the duc de Duras."

"Poor man!" cried the maréchale; "and what has he done, if I may inquire?"

"Oh, hitherto I believe he has only sinned in intention; but he would fain supplant me by introducing the late madame Pater—she who is now the baroness de New—k."

"Why, indeed," said the maréchale, taking a pinch of snuff, "there must be some little truth in what you tell me, for a confused report has already reached my ear."

"And yet," said I, indignantly, "you have never said any thing to me."

"And what good would that have done?" said she, calmly; "do you not know that there are a thousand envious of your present post, and a hundred who flatter themselves with purchasing it at cost price. You ought certainly to be sufficiently on your guard to prevent their outbidding you."

"You have then heard mention of this scheme?" said I.

"I have and I have not; I was the other day at the house of madame du Deffant, with the maréchale de Luxembourg, mesdames de Cambis and de Boufflers, the bishop de Mirepoix, and le Carracioli. The conversation turned upon madame de New—k: le Carracioli, who is as spiteful as a monkey, declared that she was to be admitted to a share of your power, and that she owed being promoted to the honour of your colleague entirely to the skilful management of the duc de Duras."

"The skill of the duke!"

"My dear creature," returned the maréchale, "interest can inspire the most stupid animal with something like sense."

"And what did the rest of the party at madame du Deffant's say to this?"

"Very little, on account of my being there. My brother, the bishop, to avoid being compromised in any private conversation that might ensue, began relating the circumstances of his suit with the chapter of his cathedral: the duchesse de Luxembourg began to rally young la Rochefoucauld in her usual manner for having, as she said, commenced his introduction into society by attempting to begin where he should leave off; that is to say, for devoting himself to a course of study and chemical experiments, instead of frequenting gaming houses and keeping an opera-dancer. Madame de Cambis and 'the statue,' as we call madame de Boufflers, shrugged up their shoulders, and seemed to warn each other by a cautious glance of saying any thing in my presence."

"And so they managed to elude all explanation?" cried I.

"Greatly to my annoyance, I assure you," answered madame de Mirepoix; "for it was placing me in a most unpleasant light to take it for granted that, as your friend, I must needs become the retailer and repeater of all the idle gossip of the place."

"One thing," said I, "seems at least certain, that the intrigue is known."

"Or at least presumed possible; for I can assure you the assertions of Carracioli do not always obtain implicit credence. The Neapolitan is esteemed justly as a man of great wit, but decidedly the greatest liar in the world."

"Indeed!" replied I; "then let signor Carracioli beware of exercising his inventive powers upon subjects which so nearly concern me, or I will speedily arrange for his return to his own country."

"Nay," interrupted the maréchale, "I really think his proneness to falsehood and exaggeration may rather be employed to serve than injure your cause."

As the maréchale pronounced these words she stopped, and, after a moment's silence, continued, "Pardon me, my dear friend, if I strongly counsel you

to avoid any fracas with the duc de Duras. The duties of his employment keep him perpetually about the king's person, and an open quarrel between you would greatly annoy his majesty, who, as you know, is too much habituated to him to be easily reconciled to his loss were you to seek his dismissal; and who can tell whether Louis XV. might not seek his society even in the house of this very madame de New—k. Keep on terms of amity with him; depend upon it the king will be highly gratified with you for so doing."

These observations clearly pointed out to me the necessity of prudence, and I promised the maréchale I would strictly adhere to her advice; I waited likewise till comte Jean had investigated the affair. I therefore continued to treat the duke as usual, whilst I carefully concealed all my uneasiness from the king, whom I knew too well to lose my time in questioning: he was the most expert dissembler in all France, and, what I could not endure in his character, was the ease and coolness with which he could assume the appearance of friendship and interest towards those very persons he had resolved upon depriving of their place at court, and dismissing them from office.

The king had acquired this fault (which my natural frankness exalted into a crime) from the duc de Villeroi, his tutor, and the cardinal de Fleury, his Mentor; both of whom had inculcated dissimulation as a virtue indispensably necessary to kings. Thus I well knew, that if there really did exist any understanding between Louis XV. and the baroness de New—k, it was not from his lips I should hear a confession of it; his greatest pleasure consisted in those little acts of infidelity which he could commit unknown to me. For many days I remained seriously uneasy; the comte d'Hargicourt visited me daily. I spoke to him of the baroness, of whom he still continued greatly enamoured, although he no longer pronounced her name without pain and confusion. I inquired the cause of this change. "My elder brother," replied he, "does me great in-

justice; he accused me only yesterday of aiding the baroness de New—k by my indiscretion, to spy all your proceedings. His charge was very painful to me, and I have determined for the future to be more on my guard how I reply to even the most indifferent question."

I advised him to persevere in so wise a resolution, and not to repeat any thing, however innocent, which might be so ingeniously tortured into mischief by the evil-disposed.

"If I mistake not," said I to my brother-in-law, "the baroness is rather anxious to know who are the persons who most frequently visit me."

"Not only their names," replied he, "but even the precise hours at which they were accustomed to call on you."

"And did you not at once perceive the perfidious intent of such inquiries?"

"I must confess," answered he, "that it did somewhat weaken my ardent admiration for the fair questioner; however, I contrived to evade her inquiry, by saying that your guests were too much occupied in paying their court to you to be enabled to observe the moment at which any of the company either arrived or departed.

"Elie," said I, to my brother-in-law, "your answer displays so much diplomatic gallantry, that I must positively make you an ambassador if you continue to observe the same prudence."

Poor Elie did not certainly partake of the family talent, but what was deficient in sense or ready wit was abundantly atoned for by the upright rectitude of his character. He easily perceived how completely he had been made the tool of the artful baroness, and his honest nature determined at once to break from an enthralment, where he could only purchase smiles at the expense of honour.

Nearly a week elapsed, when one morning comte Jean entered my apartment with an air of triumph.

"Victoria!" cried he, "the game is ours. This

paper contains the whole story of the intrigue; Blagnac has done wonders; he is worth a dozen of Parisian valets." (Blagnac was the name of the valet de chambre of my brother-in-law, comte d'Hargicourt.)

"What have you learned then?" inquired I.

"All, my good sister: the fellow played his part so well with the femme de chambre of the baroness, (by the way, he found the task easier, as the girl was young and pretty,) that she told him all she knew, and even more. This letter was intended to be put into the post; Blagnac took charge of it; it is a most curious production, written by the baroness in German, of which I have had a double copy made; one for you, take it, and make what use you think proper of it."

I lost no time in perusing the following letter, which certainly might serve as a model of German naïveté:—

"My kindest and much-esteemed cousin,—I have been more successful than I could have ventured to anticipate, and in a short time I shall be the envy of every female but yourself, my excellent cousin, who love me too well to feel jealous at my good fortune. I have already informed you of the friendly intentions of his grace the duc de Duras, first gentleman in waiting to the king, and besides that, my dear cousin, I have had the extreme honour of being presented to his majesty, Louis XV., who was so good as to praise my beauty; indeed I am daily expecting fresh proofs of his gracious approbation. But, alas! my dear cousin, this great prince is growing old like the poorest of his subjects, although that artful creature the comtesse du Barri contrives, by one deceitful scheme and another, to make him believe he is still young. However, I am told her influence is quite on the decline, and I trust the time is not far distant when the king will perceive that there are other females near him more worthy in every respect of his royal preference.

"Accident has favoured me with an admirer, capable of furnishing me with much information on many important subjects; he is a brother-in-law of this madame

du Barri, a young man, not eminently qualified to shine as a statesman, but particularly useful as a babbler and revealer of secrets."

The remainder of this letter bore no reference to me, and merely related to family affairs.

"What think you of this epistle?" inquired the count, as I laid it down.

"The affair is not so far advanced as I had thought it," replied I; "and I begin to feel rather less alarm."

"I did not confine myself," continued comte Jean, "to abstracting the letter, but I went further still; I called immediately upon the lieutenant of police, who, I can assure you, is entirely devoted to us. We agreed together that M. Rigeley d'Oigny should carry the original to his majesty after the discussion which takes place to-day in the private cabinet; we are in hopes that it may have the double effect of disturbing the king in his amour, and drawing down his displeasure upon the duc de Duras."

I had no advice to give in an affair which appeared already settled and arranged; I therefore left comte Jean and M. de Sartines to act as they thought proper, whilst I determined to use my best weapons in defence of my own cause. I redoubled my usual attentions and assiduities towards the king, increased my natural gaiety and vivacity, varied each day my ornaments and style of dress; by turns a timid shepherdess or a sprightly coquette, a dishevelled Bacchante, or a tender and languishing maiden, till poor Louis XV. had no time to recover from one fit of surprise and admiration till he was thrown into another. However, he preserved a strict silence upon the subject of the letter of the baroness; still he saw her less and less frequently, whilst the duc de Duras seemed lost in astonishment at my increasing favour. One day that we were alone together I could not refrain from saying,

"My lord duke, you will certainly lose your cause."

"What cause, madam?" asked he.

"That which you expected to gain through the interference of the baroness de New—k."

The duke was overcome with confusion; but darting on him a look of sovereign contempt, I quitted him to join madame de Flavacourt, who had just entered the room. The poor duke could not recover himself the whole of the evening, and I was sufficiently avenged by the sight of his evident disquietude. I communicated what had passed to comte Jean.

"You were wrong in saying what you did," answered my brother-in-law; "why should you awaken his suspicions?"

For his just punishment and my revenge," cried I; "I have at least the satisfaction of knowing that he will not sleep one tranquil hour this night."

CHAPTER XXIV.

Scene between the comtesse du Barri and the duc de Duras—The maréchale de Mirepoix endeavours to reconcile them—The blind man's mistake—The double penance—Anecdote—The philosophic husband—The duchesse de Chaulnes and her page—The manners of the regency—The first adventure of Louis XV.

Whilst comte Jean and myself were thus amusing ourselves at the expense of M. de Duras, the poor duke continued upon thorns. The worthy man had no objection to aid his sovereign, as a faithful subject should do, in the prosecution of his pleasures, but he by no means liked the idea of involving himself in an open quarrel with me before his schemes were sufficiently matured to incur my displeasure without any personal

risk. I had predicted rightly when I affirmed that he would pass a tedious night, for early the following day a note was brought me from the alarmed duke, praying of me to grant him an interview as early as convenient.

After some little hesitation I returned a verbal message by his valet de chambre, signifying that M. de Duras might call on me whenever he pleased. "And now, my dear duke," said I to myself, "with the blessing of Providence you shall hear a few plain truths."

The duke was not slow in profiting by my permission; he soon arrived, dressed in all his best smiles and graces, and seeking, under the mask of an assumed ease and cheerfulness of demeanour, to conceal the embarrassment he really felt. I returned his salutation with the same ceremonious politeness, and certain of being able to torment him whenever I pleased, allowed him to commence a studied strain of conversation upon indifferent subjects, evidently spun out by him with a view to put off the fearful discussion which brought him to me.

"My lord," said I, at last, "you informed me in a note I had the honour to receive from you this morning, that I could be serviceable in some way to you. I am well aware how very precious your time is, and therefore wait but for you to state your wishes."

"Madam," replied he, with a sort of involuntary agitation, "you sported with my feelings yesterday in the most cruel manner; a most cutting observation fell from your lips; it was altogether so very painful to my sentiments, that I considered it an act of duty as well as friendship——"

"Friendship, my lord!" interrupted I; "degrade not the word by so unworthy an application of it; say, rather, that my remark boded ill for your interests."

M. de Duras exclaimed against the severity of my language, protesting that he felt for me the liveliest and most sincere attachment.

"Sincere!" repeated I; "you must pardon me, my

lord duke, if I have my doubts on that point: but my observation of yesterday was prematurely uttered. I attacked when I should have been content to have awaited my adversary's first blow."

Again the duke solicited an explanation of the mystery contained in my remarks, to which I contented myself with warning him, that such a measure might prove less desirable so far as concerned him than he at present seemed to apprehend, and that I advised his foregoing such a request for his own sake.

"I see," replied he, "that I am the victim of some black calumny, and my enemies appear to have succeeded in injuring me in your estimation."

"They have at least endeavoured so to do, my lord duke," answered I; "but in that respect you have fared no worse than the rest of my friends and adherents. I have ever rejected with disdain all such base insinuations; and I now flatter myself that you will be enabled to prove satisfactorily that you have not forfeited your reputation for candour and open dealing."

"Most assuredly, madam, I shall be able with ease to establish my claims to such a character at least," replied the duke.

"Then pray, my lord, begin; I am all attention to what you have to say."

These words pronounced in a dry and sarcastic manner, were far from satisfying him to whom they were addressed, and we resumed our original position with regard to each other. The duke, who had by no means intended to lead me to this point, saw at once that he must determine upon some measure by which to extricate himself from his present unpleasant situation. "Madam," said he, at length, "I will be candid with you; for between persons like ourselves good faith alone should be employed. You accuse me of having attempted to introduce the baroness de New—k into the château of Versailles, with a view of placing her in his majesty's way. I declare the charge to be wholly false, and certainly it would not be me who

would wish to provoke such a revolution in his majesty's preference."

Delighted to see him thus losing every advantage, I pressed the duke with fresh questions.

"Yet I presume you are acquainted with the lady in question?"

"I am so, madam."

"And you think her handsome?"

"She is generally admitted to be so," answered the duke; "and I must confess, that I know but of one female of more surpassing loveliness."

"Pray no compliments, my lord," said I, coolly bowing; "but this lady—you see her frequently, I believe?"

"Occasionally, madam."

"And what is your opinion of her? is she amiable, sensible? of an estimable character? or is she a person capable of injuring her friends?"

"No, madam," replied de Duras, quickly, "I know her sufficiently well to be quite persuaded that no circumstance could ever induce her to betray those who would fain have served her."

"In that case," rejoined I, "I must leave it to you to decide on which side the fault lies. Here, my lord," continued I, putting a paper into his hand, "here is the exact copy of a letter, the original of which is in the possession of his majesty. Take the trouble of reading it; it will convince you that I am much better informed than you suppose me to be."

The duke, ignorant of what the paper contained, eagerly unfolded it, and continued to read, or rather to study it with long and fixed attention; not knowing what to reply, yet feeling well aware that some remark was necessary.

"What can I say to all this, madam?" cried he, at length. "This letter surprises me beyond expression; the baroness must be the basest and vilest of her sex. However——:" he stopped.

"Pray proceed, my lord duke," said I; "I am all attention to your explanation."

"Well, then, madam," returned he, hesitatingly, "you already possess it: the confession is made, you are informed of all I wished to conceal; and since disguise is useless, I must acknowledge the truth of everything contained in this letter, with the exception of those remarks concerning you, which I pledge my honour, never proceeded from me. No, madam, I entertain too sincere and warm a regard for you."

"Stay, my lord! nor insult me further with these idle professions; you have been worse than an open or declared enemy. In the first place, your attentions and assiduities to me were merely compulsory, or, at any rate, the most prudent steps you could adopt to curry favour with his majesty; but with equal facility you sought my downfal, when you pictured to yourself the possibility of turning it to your advantage: in a word, you were desirous of accumulating the advantages of friendship and the benefits of treachery: that, however, is no longer in your power; you must remain what you are, and I must continue as I am. I will not annoy the king by communicating to him your perfidious conduct; he is satisfied with you, and I respect his preference too much to disturb it, but never shall you obtain from me the slightest mark of favour; and whenever I draw out any list of persons by his majesty's command, you may be very certain of being excluded from it."

During this address the duke stood motionless, with his eyes fixed on the ground, looking the very personification of a disappointed courtier: then, stammering out a few words of regret at having been so unfortunate as to lose my confidence, he bowed and retired.

I was soon visited by the good-natured mediatrix of all those with whom I had any cause of complaint —the maréchale de Mirepoix, who, in her anxiety to

live upon terms of universal goodwill and amity, never decidedly espoused the quarrel of any person.

"And so, my dear creature," cried she, "you and poor de Duras are completely at war, like cat and dog. You appear to have vented your anger most warmly, and he still dreads fresh explosions: depend upon it the poor man was drawn into the scheme without fully comprehending the part he was acting; and, as he protests, thought much less of injuring you than of benefiting himself."

"And you appear, my good friend," replied I, "to expect that I should feel obliged to him for all the mischief he did not effect."

"My sweet countess," returned madame de Mirepoix, in a soothing voice, "generosity becomes you so well, and, besides, your pardon would bring back the poor duke body and soul to your interests, whilst the weight of your anger may drive him to extremities. Do take pity upon him," added she, holding up her hands: "remember we are promised pardon for our greatest sins when we heartily repent and forsake them."

"Leave this double-faced man, my dear maréchale, I beseech of you," said I; "and if you really love me, talk of something else."

Madame de Mirepoix was about to reply, when the king entered with his grand almoner; they were both laughing immoderately; I inquired the cause. "I must refer you to the cardinal," answered the king.

I turned to his eminence, and begged of him to afford myself and madame de Mirepoix an opportunity of sharing in their mirth; and M. de la Roche Aymon, who seldom required much solicitation to talk, readily undertook to gratify me, and related the following anecdote:—

"Mass was yesterday celebrated, according to holy custom, at the church of the Quinze Vingts. In pursuance of an ancient custom, the office of sounding the bell at the elevation of the host is performed by a blind man. Upon the present occasion the person upon

whom devolved the performance of this sacred duty being compelled to quit the altar, left it for a minute, and returned with all possible haste, just as the priest had concluded the introductory prayer; in considerable agitation he threw himself on his knees, with one hand sought to regain his little bell, which he could not immediately find, and with the other attempted to raise the garment of the officiating priest. A loud scream was heard; a sudden tumult arose, and the unfortunate blind man was dragged from the altar with every indication of rage and abhorrence."

"What had the poor creature done?" inquired I, with much anxiety.

"Alas! madam," replied the cardinal, "he had mistaken the robe of a female devotee for the sacerdotal vestment."

At these words we were seized with an irresistible fit of laughter, in which the king most heartily joined.

The grand almoner next related to us, that at Rheims a female servant, very pious, but still more silly, had been desired by her confessor, by way of penance, to strike her bosom every time she heard the bell sound for the elevation of the host. Unfortunately she had selected as the spot for performing this duty a church at which two masses were celebrating; the first was duly and properly noticed by the fair penitent, who dealt out her blows with the most praiseworthy energy; but, lo! a second bell was heard, and the poor girl felt no small difficulty in deciding how to discharge the double penance: so, while with one hand she struck her bosom the most furious blows, with the other she struck herself on a part of her body rather more suited for such rough treatment.

The cardinal de la Roche Aymon possessed a long string of these tales, which he delighted in repeating. The duc d'Ayen, who was with us, wished in his turn to repeat to us an affair which, as he said, had just occurred in a family of his acquaintance.

A young married lady had a lover who likewise

inhabited the same house, but occupied apartments two stories higher. This lover was accustomed to pay her nightly visits, whilst the husband, who slept in a separate chamber, was accustomed to steal from his bed for the purpose of visiting a young soubrette, whose lodging was among the attics. One night the two gallants met suddenly on the staircase, while one was ascending and the other rapidly descending; the lover drew back, the husband stopped, and called out thieves, robbers, &c. The gallant then gave his name, upon which the husband coolly observed, " Go about your business, sir, and let me go about mine." They then proceeded each his way, and the following day appeared to have no recollection of any thing having transpired.

The king took this opportunity of speaking to us of the regency. He remarked, with great tact and judgment, upon the freedom and license which had succeeded the restraint madame de Maintenon had imposed on the court. For my own part I must excuse myself from repeating the panegyric passed upon this formal and prudish mistress of Louis XIV. Certainly, of all the royal favourites, there was none to whom I bore so little resemblance as to madame de Maintenon: still, I fear not, but my candid and frank disposition would be equally likely to obtain the blessing of heaven as the cant and cunning of this smooth-speaking hypocrite.

The king afterwards reverted to his preceptor, cardinal de Fleury, and I could not forbear asking him if it were true that this minister had watched him till his marriage like a rich young heiress. " He was indeed a rigid and watchful guardian," replied Louis XV.; " but heavy as his yoke pressed, I had at least the consolation of playing him some mischievous tricks. My grandfather, Henry IV., had his Fleurette; I might relate to you the story of mine, which resembles, in a slight degree, M. de la Roche Aymon's story of the blind man. The damsel in question was the daughter of one of my footmen, and I frequently encountered

her by chance on a staircase which led from my chamber to an observatory on the terrace. In this observatory was a telescope with which I used to amuse myself in watching all that passed in the Place d'Aunes and up the avenue.

"One day I surprised the young girl on the terrace steadily gazing through the telescope: as she stood bending over it her well-shaped ancle caught my attention, and approaching the curious girl a sudden idea, originating rather in a spirit of boyish mischief than any improper ideas, I caught her dress, and threw it completely over her head. Two outcries reached my ear at the same moment, one from the frightened maiden, and the other a severe ejaculation of 'Holy saints! what do I see!' from my preceptor.

"The good bishop of Frejus had followed me unperceived, and reached the telescope just as I was about to repay my frightened captive with a good-natured kiss for the terror she had experienced.

"I cannot even now suppress a smile at the recollection of the scandalized air with which the grave prelate proceeded to lecture poor me, who stood with my head hanging down, little foreseeing how many similar scenes I should enact.

"This was my first offence, and heavy was the punishment inflicted for it. In the innocence of my heart I believed myself very culpable; but a circumstance which occurred not long after set my mind at rest. I happened to be amusing myself in an apartment whilst the bishop of Frejus, unconscious of my vicinity, was sitting in an adjoining room relating this freak of my youthful majesty to a lady of the court. They both laughed immoderately, and I now perceived that what I had bewailed as the first step to guilt was merely a subject for merriment; and the worst part seemed to be the silly embarrassment I had betrayed. My childish vanity was deeply piqued, and I resolved that they should never more have occasion to ridicule my false modesty, or sheepishness as it was termed.

This lady was no other than madame de Nesle, whose eldest daughter, madame de Mailli, was not long afterwards bestowed upon me by the cardinal himself. But the prelate was right; there is a time and a season for all things; and had he not so carefully preserved me in my youth I should not have been what I am in my present age."

"But, sire," said the duc d'Ayen, "they say a young saint makes an old ——."

"Go on," cried Louis XV., who was in an excellent humour. But the duke bit his lips and was silent, for he perceived that his joke ran too much at the expense of his majesty.

CHAPTER XXV.

Letter to M. de Voltaire—Dorat—Epistle to Margot—Quarrel with Beaumarchais—The king's foresight—The libeller Morande—Attempts of the duc d'Aiguillon and M. de Sartines to repress the contemptible being—Monsieur Bellenger—Morande deceives them all—The maréchale de Mirepoix reconciles the comtesse du Barri with Beaumarchais.

I SHOULD attempt an endless task were I to set about a description of the king's antipathy for M. de Voltaire, who, on his part, seldom suffered a month to elapse without adding fresh provocations to the long list already made out against him. About this time he was imprudent enough to publish a work, which, although dignified by him with the title of a philosophical sketch, was in fact a complete romance, full of the severest and grossest allusions to the pope, clergy, morals, and even

religion of the nation: this book was styled *Letters of Amabed.* The license taken by M. de Voltaire when speaking of sacred things made Louis XV. look with anger and disdain upon a production, which would otherwise have been cited as a model of sense and elegant diction. We eagerly devoured these *Letters of Amabed* in secret at the château, but those persons who believed themselves held up to ridicule under the title of the *Fa-tuttos* of France sounded the alarm, and the outcry soon became general. The archbishop of Paris, with his brethren, were for laying the little province of Ferney under an interdict, and besought the king not to suffer so scandalous an outrage to pass unpunished. Madame Louise, from the depths of her convent, wrote a letter full of fear and alarm lest so profane and sacrilegious an attack should involve the nation in a worse fate than that of Sodom and Gomorrah. I even believe that letters came from the pope himself, beseeching his majesty not to permit the sacred college to be insulted with impunity, by allowing such pages as those in the *Letters of Amabed*, which described some of the holiest pillars of the church under the appellations of cardinals "Sacripante" and "Faquinetti," to appear in print.

The king imagined that he should be making his peace with heaven by undertaking its defence upon earth, and would have desired nothing better than an opportunity of wreaking his own wrathful indignation against M. de Voltaire, but the opposition in favour of the philosopher was too strong for him: myself at its head; then the chancellor, the duc d'Aiguillon, the whole train of lords in waiting, dukes, peers, men of law and men of letters, all ranged themselves on the side of the philosopher. After them came, as the partisans of M. de Voltaire, the king of Prussia and the empress of Russia, who thought it no trifling honour to affix to their titles of king and czarina that of the friend and correspondent of M. de Voltaire.

Louis XV. feared to declare open war against such fearful odds; he contented himself therefore with

expressing his personal displeasure at the publication of the offensive work, and predicting that this universal praise and enthusiasm bestowed upon an atheist, would, sooner or later, bring down ruin upon the French monarchy. "Were another deluge threatened," said he, "and a new ark to be prepared, I would counsel the second Noah to exclude from it, when stocking it with animals, that wild, ferocious, and untameable creature called a philosopher. It is a species capable of sacrificing the whole human race to its own insatiate ambition."

For my own part I lived in continual dread, lest the criticising pen of M. de Voltaire should next select me as its victim, and I contrived to keep up his good-humour from time to time by letters and presents, more especially when I had found it necessary, in order to pacify the king's angry disposition towards the philosopher of Fernay, to appear to have forsaken his cause. I was reduced to the same expedient upon the present occasion, when I dispatched the following letter, which will prove, that if I understood little of literature, it was not for want of good will.

"My dear Sir,—You must permit me to tell you honestly that you are the most heedless of all men of letters, and really seem to take a pleasure in involving yourself in fresh disagreeables. Your last work has provoked a most dangerous spirit of exasperation; those whom you have attacked, have sharp as well as long claws, and are abundantly supported by every catholic court. Listen, I pray of you, to the dictates of prudence, for your own sake, for your present welfare, your future repose, and the satisfaction of your numerous friends.

"Know then, that at the very moment in which I write these lines you are menaced by a violent storm; the high-priest of Babylon deals out anathemas against you; the grand almoner of Belus, forgetting his own gallantries, treats you as a profane and licentious writer; the daughter of the monarch implores her father,

by letter, to punish your presumption, and Belus himself is violently irritated. I advise you to hold yourself on your guard, for although you have a numerous party here to plead your cause, our credit and influence might fail before the imperious and overwhelming complaint of the ministers of religion.

"I am charged to supplicate you, and I do so, likewise, from the dictates of my own mind, to moderate the fire of your impetuous youth; for, although we know you are but twenty years of age, we would fain have you conduct yourself with the prudence of an octogenarian; at that period of life reason must have reached its height. We beseech you, therefore, (who can do all things,) to avail yourself by anticipation of a small share of it. Do not drive your enemies to the necessity of carrying things to extremities, nor give them any excuse for their hatred towards you. Above all, I pray of you not to interpret the earnest request we make you into an attempt at forcing advice. No, my much esteemed friend, all we desire and ask is that you should enjoy the comforts of a peaceful life for your own sake and the glory of France.

"Ever yours, &c. &c."

I expected great things from this letter, ignorant that the spiteful old man entertained a pique against me for having failed in obtaining what he desired, and I soon had proof that I did not stand well with him. He did not reply to me in a direct manner, but wrote to the duc d'Aiguillon in his usual manner, denying his writings, accusing his enemies of slandering him, spoke of his great weakness and infirmities, his old age and approaching end; and then, relapsing into his natural mood, ended by laughing at and defying the whole world. I really began to think he was but little deserving of the interest we took in him.

For myself, in particular, I have never had much reason for feeling flattered either with him or poets in general, who were, indeed, entirely at the disposition

of the Choiseul party, and the philosophers, my secret enemies. You knew Dorat, that scented poet, whose verses breathed nothing but roses and perfumes, where nature was thrust aside by the grossest flattery, and elegance entirely lost in mannerism and conceit. Dorat had at first loaded me with flattery, then, all at once, without either rhyme or reason, he wrote his epistle to Margot; do you remember it? Perhaps you never saw it; I will, at any rate, transcribe it as an act of penitence, and by way of proving my utter self-denial.

Epistle to Margot.

" Pourquoi craindrais-je de le dire ?
C'est Margot qui fixe mon goût;
Oui, Margot, cela vous fait rire.
Que fait le nom ? la chose est tout.
Je sais que son humble naissance
N'offre point à l'orgueil flatté,
La chimérique jouissance
Dont s'enivre la vanité,
Que née au sein de l'indigence
Jamais un éclat fastueux ;
Sans le voile de l'opulence
N'a pu dérober ses aïeux,
Que, sans esprit, sans connoissance,
A ses discours fastidieux
Succède un stupide silence ;
Mais Margot a de si beaux yeux,
Qu'un seul de ses regards vaut mieux
Que fortune, esprit, et naissance.
Quoi ! dans ce monde singulier,
Irai-je consulter d'Hozier ?
Non, l'aimable enfant de Cythère
Craint peu de se mésallier ;
Souvent pour l'amoureux mystère,
Ce dieu dans ses goûts roturiers
Donne le pas à la Bergère
En dépit de seize quartiers,
Et qui sait ce qu'à ma maîtresse
Garde l'avenir incertain ?
Margot, encore dans sa jeunesse,

N'est qu'à sa premier faiblesse,
Laissez la devenir———
Bientot peut-être le destin
La fera marquise ou comtesse."

By marquise, was no doubt, intimated madame de Pompadour, but the comtesse could allude only to me, and not a little provoked my displeasure. M. Dorat called all the gods to witness that, in writing these lines he had intended no application to myself or any other person, that the verses were the mere offspring of fancy alone, and by way of convincing me of the truth of what he said, he commenced rhyming several sonnets in my praise: but I could not receive them with any pleasure, nor consider a few complimentary lines as an atonement for the annoyance occasioned by a long and severe epigram.

Now I am upon the subject, I will just tell you what occurred between M. de Beaumarchais and myself. I know that very recently he has complained to you of my conduct towards him; he pretends he has served me, and he has done so in a trifling degree; but his charge against me of a want of gratitude requires some little explanation, and with a view to this, I shall collect together several facts which took place in the course of a year.

M. de Beaumarchais, in his eagerness to ingratiate himself with all those persons who could be serviceable to him, had procured an introduction to me. I saw him but seldom, and never permitted his evening calls, to his great vexation, as he had hoped, during such opportunities, to have met with the king. Two reasons, however, made such a thing impracticable, etiquette on the one hand, and the great repugnance his majesty always displayed to the society of men of letters. Disappointed in his expectations, Beaumarchais permitted several severe and angry words to escape him, which were quickly repeated to me. At first, I treated them as undeserving of attention, and blamed those about me for making them of sufficient

importance to discuss. But when M. de Beaumarchais quitted my party to enlist under the banners of the dauphiness, I felt considerable annoyance at his defection, and when his *Barber of Seville* was ready for representation, knowing that he relied upon the patronage of her royal highness, I employed all my interest to thwart him, and at length succeeded in preventing its being played.

I did not go these lengths without a powerful adviser you will easily believe, and my present instigator was the duc d'Aiguillon, who, besides a strong personal dislike to M. de Beaumarchais, had a long score to settle with him for various sonnets and epigrams, written by the said Beaumarchais, at the expense of the duke; who, still further, remembered the ridiculous figure he had cut, when compelled to sit and witness a proverb called *Bad is the Best*, played under the direction of Beaumarchais before his majesty, the subject of which was taken from the famous Gaëzmann cause.

I was thus engaged in open warfare with the dauphiness, who, warmly interested in the success of the *Barber of Seville*, applied to all the persons capable of assisting in such cases to produce its representation. I called in the aid of the police, and by their interference had the misfortune to obtain an insulting victory. The play was deferred, and was never acted till the following reign.

I must leave you, who know better than any other person the character of Beaumarchais, to conceive how much he was irritated at my success, but he did not as yet seek to punish me for it. He contented himself with inveighing against the Maupeou parliament, whom he tormented beyond measure with his witty and severe memorials; he lost all chance of favour at court, but gained it in the public estimation. The king particularly resented the patronage and protection bestowed by the prince de Conti on Beaumarchais, and said, in the height of his indignation, " It is not

with my parliament the people are now waging war but against myself, and I see that I shall have to take that instigator of mischief, Beaumarchais, into my own hands before long, if he persists in his present conduct. Upon this occasion he repeated that prophetical observation, the fulfilment of which we already begin to perceive, "My successor will have enough to do."

The king saw the dark side of every thing, while to my view, all objects were the bright *couleur de rose.* However, my hour for anxiety arrived; there existed in the world a poor miserable wretch, a native of Arnay le Duc, who had sunk the obscure name of his father (Thevenot) into the more high-sounding appellation of the chevalier de Morande, who, driven from France by a course of cheating and roguery, well worthy of the gallies or hanging, had found an asylum in London, where he employed his pen in writing against all the good and respectable part of mankind. You may be very sure he did not spare me, and accordingly I received the following letter by the ordinary course of post:—

"MADAM,—My enemies, who are yours likewise, have succeeded in driving me from France, and not satisfied with that, continue still to persecute me in the asylum I have found. I owe them a heavy punishment, and they shall feel my revenge; but still, I am not able to overtake them with the full weight of my vengeance without involving you likewise, by making all Europe acquainted with every particular of your life, with the utmost minutiæ of which I am intimately acquainted. Of this I can furnish abundant proofs, and amply satisfy you as to the piquant revelations I can, and most certainly shall, give to the public. I shall speak of your family even before your birth, follow you step by step in your career, and astonish even yourself by the relation of many scenes, you have, in all probability, brought yourself to forget. It is still in your power to spare yourself the load of shame such an exposure must inevitably draw down upon you, and

to close my lips for ever upon all subjects connected with you by bestowing on me the only reparation our respective situations permits me to accept.

"I have distributed the prospectus of a work in four volumes, to be called, *Private Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure,* in which you will be the principal character.

"Are you willing to purchase the book ere it appears? you may do so on the following conditions—in the first place, 12,000 livres to be paid down, an extra sum when the affair is concluded of 100 louis, and further, a pension from the king of 4000 livres, to descend after my death to my wife, and from her to my son, this is all I ask. My demand must be a moderate one when the first sale of the book would procure me more than 50,000 crowns.

"I must request of you to lose no time in hastening the negotiation; I have no time to lose, and a silence on your part of more than a month will compel me to enter upon hostilities by putting my work to press; you will judge for yourself if such a measure would be most to your advantage.

"I leave the decision of the matter with you, madam. Certain persons have recommended me to show you no favour, and they likewise offer me terms I shall most certainly accept if you refuse what I have proposed. I remain, madam, with the utmost respect,

"Your very humble and obedient servant,

"The Chevalier de Morande."

I must confess to you that the perusal of this letter threw me into the utmost agitation, and, as in cases of similar difficulty, I lost no time in convoking a privy council, composed of my sisters-in-law and comte Jean. We unanimously agreed that it was imperatively necessary to exterminate the least trace of a libel which would have exposed me to the whole weight of public clamour and indignation; as for the hush-money required, that was the least of our care. However, I

found it impossible to conceal this affair from two persons whose opinion I highly estimated, and this was the duc d'Aiguillon and the lieutenant of police. This latter, under pretext of serving me, adopted measures by no means calculated to forward my interests, as you shall hear hereafter. The latter repaired to lord Stormond, and begged of this ambassador to arrange things so that London should no longer be the refuge for those contemptible pamphleteers who were the annoyance of every court in Europe.

Lord Stormond was at this period striving to ingratiate himself with the court of France on account of the American war, and, delighted at having found an opportunity of obliging us, he wrote himself to his sovereign. The reply (so well known and accredited) was not long in arriving; it was written by the king of England himself, who, with his own hand, confirmed the assurance of his ambassador, that nothing could be more agreeable to him than promoting the wishes of his brother of France, especially in so just a cause, but that unfortunately the laws of Great Britain were greatly opposed to the punishment of such offenders; that, for his own part, he would not oppose such pests of society being carried out of the country, or drowned in the river Thames, could such an act of justice be performed without infringing upon, or violating the rights, charters, and privileges of the city of London.

Whilst this negotiation was progressing, and M. de Sartines busily employed preparing his schemes, I had dispatched a trustworthy person (M. de Prédeaux de Chemilles, treasurer to the Maréchaussée,) to England. His business was to affect to treat for the manuscript on his own account; he had already offered 40,000 livres, and Morande, who had been hard at work preparing his work, hearing nothing from me, was beginning to incline towards his proposition, when an unexpected incident changed the face of affairs.

M. de Sartines, having learned through the minister for foreign affairs the friendly disposition of his Britan-

nic majesty, determined to make a merit with me of having put it out of Morande's power to injure or annoy me farther. In consequence of this resolve, he laid the plan for a most ill-judged attempt, the results of which were widely different from what he had anticipated. Among the many persons of his acquaintance, who were soliciting, through his means, some secret and lucrative employ, was a certain captain named Bellenger, who had either borne that rank in a regiment of militia, or, as is equally probable, was merely a self-created officer. This man, however, who was half rogue and half swindler, was a noisy, swaggering kind of person, more prone to talk than to perform, and possessed of a larger share of effrontery than courage. To him it was proposed to repair to London to seize Morande, and having managed to inveigle him on board a French vessel, moored in the Thames, to bring him prisoner to France.

Bellenger promised to accomplish all this and more if required; nothing was too difficult for him to perform, according to his own statement; and having associated four or five villains, even greater scoundrels than himself, in the enterprise, he set out at the head of this respectable party, and arrived safely on British ground. He was particularly charged to act with skill and address, but himself and companions conducted themselves much more like idiots, mixing with all the people of their own description they could meet with.

Morande soon learned that Bellenger had arrived upon some secret mission; he affected to be wholly unsuspicious of their business, and received these agents of the police with an air of the most perfect confidence, borrowed money of them, which they willingly lent, in the hopes of deceiving him better; and when he had obtained fifty or sixty louis from them, he began all at once to raise a great outcry in his writings, warning the English nation to beware of several French spies, who were defiling the land of freeborn Englishmen with their vile presence. The journalists of the

day took up the affair, and so high did the popular ferment go, that the protection of the king was compelled to give way to national indignation, and all that Bellenger and his associates could do was to make a precipitate retreat into France.

This termination to an expedition, from which both M. d'Aiguillon and M. de Sartines had hoped such different results, reduced them both to despair, and they were compelled to make me acquainted with the abortive plan, which, at the first hearing, I pronounced foolish and absurd in the highest degree. Indeed, I was at all times directly opposed to such measures. When next I saw the maréchale de Mirepoix, I related to her this fresh subject of vexation.

"Bless me," cried she, "what simpletons these men are; they would fain set up for diplomatists when the confusion of their own brain prevents their devising or executing any plan; on the contrary, they only heap mischief upon mischief, and folly upon folly. They should have sent, not a parcel of rogues and vagabonds, bravos who were ready to toss a man in the sea if requested, but one person by himself, and that person of good address and consummate skill, a match for Morande himself in cunning, and able to enter at once into these sort of affairs. I think I must try my hand in the business, my dear countess; I doubt not too that I shall be more successful, for I know a diplomatist of the first order, who will soon bring you a satisfactory account of Morande and his infamous libel."

"And who can this be?" said I, with much curiosity.

"Augustine Caron de Beaumarchais himself," replied the maréchale smiling.

"How!" exclaimed I. "And you, my friend, would counsel me to employ the services of a man whom I dislike, and who bears a mortal antipathy to me!"

"Antipathy!" returned madame de Mirepoix, "what, poor Beaumarchais dislike you! Oh, no, depend upon it, you are too handsome to incur the dislike of any of his sex, and your credit is too great

to enable him to withdraw from you if even he were not induced to espouse your side from preference. And why, suffer me to ask, should he be deprived of your favour? what is his crime? that of being amiable, and jesting with much wit and good sense at the follies of those well-deserving the lash of his censure. Perhaps he was imprudent enough to aim an idle shaft at you, you in return prevent the performance of his piece; this is what I call quits. Now, he requires your support and patronage, whilst you stand no less in need of his superior address and good management; avail yourselves of each other's powers to oblige in the present conjuncture, and all will go well."

"I believe you are right," replied I. "It is, after all, a losing game to wage war with one of your *bel esprits*, and besides, for my own part, I never desire to bear malice with any person, nor do I see the least reason for preserving enmity between myself and Beaumarchais."

"That is precisely what he said himself," said the maréchale, "and you but echo back his sentiments; the moment I mention your kind permission, he will, I am sure, be all impatience to throw himself at your feet. And now," said she, "adieu, my dear friend; to-morrrow, I will bring back the penitent and devoted Beaumarchais."

The lieutenant of police arrived whilst this conversation was passing; I mentioned to him the new mediator I was about to employ.

"Ah, madam," exclaimed M. de Sartines, "pray accept him then. You are most fortunate in being enabled to confide your interests to his charge; he could manage like Scapin, to effect a marriage between the grand Turk and the republic of Venice; his audacity is only equalled by his wit."

"Be it so," replied I; "let Beaumarchais attend me to-morrow."

CHAPTER XXVI.

Morande—Motives for patronizing Piccini—Louis XV., his establishment, and that of his daughters—Royal ennui and recreations—The malicious confession—The chevalier d'Eon—Writing of the czarina Elizabeth.

ALAS, I had myself, in the midst of these intrigues, many attacks of that ennui with which the king was frequently attacked.

Thanks to the exertions and excellent management of Beaumarchais, M. Morande had agreed to surrender the papers he had prepared for the publication of his work for a sum of 20,000 livres with a pension of 4000 more, upon receipt of which, he entered into an agreement to lay aside all present or future intentions of writing the offensive memoirs; a promise which he faithfully observed during the lifetime of Louis XV., but at his death, the pension being no longer regularly paid, he resumed his design, and produced his infamous book, entitled *Anecdotes of the Comtesse du Barri*, in which truth is so adroitly mixed with falsehood as to make it one tissue of infamous calumny. However, from this moment Beaumarchais and myself continued firm friends, nor has even my downfal from power deprived me of my faithful ally.

I had about this time cleared off several affairs which had hitherto occupied my time, and prevented my being tormented by that weariness which is so invariably to be found an attendant on a court life. Fortunately for me, I learned that the dauphiness was bent upon establishing her music-master, Gluck, upon the ruins of every other French composer. I eagerly availed myself of this opportunity to propose to myself a fresh occasion of entering the field against the dauphiness, as well as to throw off the attacks of my enemy.

With all the lightness and inconsistency of my character, I employed my utmost energies in determining whether I should appear as the patroness of Lully, Rameau, or some more modern musician. Such of my friends as were not without some portion of good sense, (and unfortunately for me the number was not great,) advised me to abandon all thoughts of Philidor, Floquet, Francœur, and all musicians of similar talent, declaring that the Parisians would never support their own countrymen, while, on the contrary, their most ardent endeavours would be exerted in favour of a stranger; in a word, that if I would effectually oppose a German, it must be by giving him an Italian for a rival, by such means I should collect a crowd of partizans, and pretended virtuosos, who would cry bravo to the risk and damage of their lungs, and enable me by their numbers to wage a successful war with the dauphiness.

I could occasionally be made to comprehend the language of reason, spite of the extravagance and folly of my ordinary conduct, and in the present matter of discussion I could not deny the truth of the advice bestowed on me.

"An Italian be it then," cried I; and accordingly I made choice of Piccini, a man of much genius, a fine musician, but wholly devoid of talent for intrigue or cabal. Far more occupied in the study of the science he loved and excelled in, than in seeking to blazon forth his name and reputation, he became still more deserving of favour and patronage; I exerted my best efforts to serve him, and spread his fame throughout Paris. But unluckily I was compelled to form an alliance with Marmontel, and I can scarcely describe the sort of aversion I have entertained for the grave pathos of that author, who, on his side, had for many years cherished the bitterest rancour against me, for the frequent yawns and other ill-repressed symptoms of weariness with which I listened to the reading of his works at the house of madame de la Garde.

My great dislike to the idea of being upon terms of friendship with so insipid a person as Marmontel, was a strong reason against my supporting Piccini with all the enthusiasm necessary. While the dauphiness, who was far superior to me in all she undertook, employed more steady zeal and persevering constancy in behalf of those she wished to serve, consequently her party prevailed, and Gluck was triumphant; although I cannot but believe he owed his victory as much to his advantageous situation at court as to intrinsic merit. Another reason, too, was, that spite of the beauty of Piccini's operas, they were weighed down and spoiled by the heavy dialogues written by Marmontel, who had no more ear for poetry than he had a heart formed for sentiment.

However the patronage bestowed by me upon the Italian composer was a source of genuine gratification to me, and effectually served to recreate and employ my thoughts. I really was passionately fond of music, which I flattered myself so far as to believe I was a tolerable judge of. I spoke upon all musical discussions with the most edifying warmth and enthusiasm; nay, I even persuaded myself I made converts. The king's *penchant* for Gluck furnished a never-ending subject for conversation; we both argued the merits of the contending musicians, as though it had really been a matter of vital importance, but what principally amused us was to see the care and pains the amateurs of the respective parties were at whilst debating the merits of Gluck or Piccini, not to offend, on the one hand, his majesty Louis XV., and, on the other, the comtesse du Barri. Some of the warmest of the admirers of each would occasionally change places, and become either Gluckists or Piccinists as the king or myself chanced to turn our heads. These diverting scenes, which frequently took place, afforded more real amusement than any other part of this musical contest, and amply repaid me for having instigated it.

Louis XV. was extremely fond of free and unre-

strained conversation; it seemed, indeed, the only thing which had power to divert his mind from the fatigues of royalty, or the many causes he had for uneasiness within his family, whom he well knew dealt out their censures with a lavish hand for his mode of life, &c. &c.; at first hearing of any remark made upon his conduct he would express violent displeasure, but his disposition was too timid and weak for him to follow up these expressions of anger, and he would make the greatest concessions to avoid being compelled to put himself in a passion, but when driven to extremities he became as furious as a chained lion.

In proportion as he advanced in years, his affection for his family appeared to decline, until at length he regarded his relations merely as heirs eager to strip him of his possessions, and begrudging him the short period he had to spend upon earth. His daughters were not more liberally judged than his grandchildren; and although he made a practice of seeing the princesses every day, yet his visits seldom extended to more than a minute, and usually he had returned to his own apartments from his morning visit to the princess Adelaide, ere her sisters Sophie and Victoire had repaired to the appointed rendezvous; these hasty meetings were but little calculated to promote confidence or cement the bonds of family union. Good morning or evening, a broad joke, a familiar nickname, was all that ever passed.

In the evening the princesses, dressed in full court suits, embroidered with gold or silver, came to return their father's visit; but frequently, with a view to economize time, they had neglected the elaborate style then in vogue, of dressing their hair, so that the dishabille in which their heads appeared, formed a ludicrous contrast with their rich velvet or brocaded dresses. This trifling communication was all that took place between the king and his daughters, who very rarely solicited a private audience, but employed some third person to make their wishes known to their royal

parent; generally the mediator selected was one high either in their own confidence or in that of his majesty.

The plenipotentiary most frequently intrusted with these commissions was M. de Roquelaure, bishop of Senlis. This handsome prelate, so gentle, witty, and polite, had removed from their establishment into that of the king, without, however, losing any part of his influence over his former patronesses, of whose regard for their almoner the following anecdote will afford a trifling proof.

Having one day learned that the bishop de Senlis had a great desire to possess a picture by Guido, then in the king's possession, they begged it from Louis XV.; and no sooner was it theirs, than they all three repaired to the apartments of M. de Senlis, carrying the picture with them, and requesting the prelate to accept it as a trifling proof of their friendship and esteem.

However, this affection was subject to many ebbs and flows, as well as little differences and disputes, which were seldom of long duration. The bishop had become too necessary to permit of their preserving continued displeasure for any offence. Thus it happened that, after having treated him with great coolness on the subject of my presentation, they so quickly reinstated him in their good graces. You may remember that I was desirous of making him minister of church benefices, and exerted myself to obtain for him the post of grand almoner of France, for which the princes Louis and Ferdinand de Rohan were both warmly contending, and he would most assuredly have obtained it, had not Louis XV. died before the cardinal de la Roche Aymon.

Among the number of those persons who enjoyed considerable credit with the daughters of Louis XV. was the comtesse de Narbonne, maid of honour to the princess Adelaide, over whose mind she exercised great influence. Nothing was done without consulting her, and the recollection of the strong proof she had afforded her royal mistress of entire devotion to her service in

the affair of the accouchement, (which you may remember my relating,) gave her the strongest claims upon the princess she had so heroically served.

The baron de Blaisal, page in waiting, spite of the subordinate situation he filled, was a person of some importance; he said little, but performed much, and whilst he gave himself the airs of a second-rate favourite, yet adroitly concealed from the princess his consciousness of being honoured with her particular friendship. Next in degree to M. de Senlis came M. de Narbonne Lara, grand almoner to the princesses Sophie and Victoire, a person who possessed a considerable share of their confidence; he, in return, was entirely devoted to them, and occasionally rendered them many services. After him may be mentioned the marquise de Durfort and the comtesse de Perigord, ladies of honour, and very important personages, who contrived to preserve at the court of the princesses the most marked favour and influence.

The comtesse de Bercheny was another favourite, who held a similar situation; she was principally notorious for the splenetic insolence of her temper, which spared neither friend nor foe. She and madame de Forcalquier could never agree, and the many sharp and severe contests which took place between them frequently served to relieve and entertain the dull tedium of the princesses' court.

To a great curiosity, the king united an extreme credulity; the constant craving of his mind after novelty made him peculiarly open to deception of any sort; this facility of temper was continually abused by those around him, and I have frequently known him become the enemy of persons, who by no means merited his displeasure, simply from the representations of interested parties, who forged the most improbable tales, which were eagerly and credulously believed by the king, who acted upon the impressions thus made, without ever examining into the truth of what he had been told. This was one of the most striking defects

in the character of Louis XV., and decidedly the most difficult to correct, because it originated in that listless ennui, which was almost a part of his nature, and pursued him alike in the midst of his courtiers, in his family, at the chase, at public places, council, and even with his mistresses. In the midst of pleasure and delight a long-continued yawn would attest the weariness of mind under which the monarch laboured, and we were compelled to be engaged in perpetual endeavours to combat the enemy without our being always blessed with success. Upon this principle he retained at the chateau many persons whom he had known from his youth, and whose merit consisted in the skill with which they would supply him with a succession of recreations and amusements. The duc de Richelieu, the prince de Soubise, the marquis de Chauvelin, the bishop of Senlis, mesdames de Mirepoix, de Grammont, and de Flavacourt, all, in a word, who could, by their cheerfulness and ready wit, excite his laughter and gaiety, were ever welcome guests. As a matter of course, he soon became greatly attached to Beaumarchais, who could, as if by magic, rob his countenance of its look of care, and clothe it with smiles; for my own part I verily believe that the unbounded empire I exercised over the mind of Louis XV. was more to be ascribed to the vivacity of my disposition than any other cause.

My enemies have asserted that during my elevation there were moments when my vanity received several blows, and that I had often to dread losing the king's affections altogether. This is by no means correct; Louis XV. never exhibited the least show of coolness towards me, but was uniformly affectionate and kind, and spite of my continual dread of a rival, it would at the utmost have originated in some whim of the moment, some caprice, or the remains of long-established habit, which led him to commit a temporary infidelity, merely to return to me with increased ardour.

Things never went right with the king when he was prevented from supping in my apartments, where alone he could be styled—*all but* happy. I say almost, for perfect happiness is to be found no where, and more especially may we look in vain for it within the precincts of a court. Seated at our social board, he seemed to find fresh life and vigour in the sportive mirth and lively sallies of the guests admitted to the honour of making one amongst us; and rash and meddling would he have been deemed who had sought, by open mention or indirect allusion, to lead back the thoughts of the king to those cares of his station, which he seemed to have laid aside at the threshold of my chamber; there he desired the possession of only so much of the majesty of a king as might suffice to secure him a fitting respect, but by no means sufficient to remind his friends that he who sat among them so cheerful and unrestrained, was their sovereign and master. This voluntary abdication was entirely in favour of those whom he preferred; he detested fresh faces, and always appeared to dread that new comers, ignorant of the established rules and customs of the place, might endeavour, either from want of tact or interest, to bring him back to the fatiguing part of sovereign.

The suppers, which took place in what were styled the *petits appartements*, were truly delightful: the conversation there was animated, sparkling, witty, and constantly varying from one amusing subject to the other. At these charming meetings the man of ever so little talent or amability had his moment, in which he could appear to advantage. A long intercourse with society furnished every guest with the means of contributing in some way to the entertainment of the evening, and even where the person present could not bear his part in the lively conversation, he was more sheltered from ill-natured observation than he could have been elsewhere. The duc d'Ayen (of whom I have so frequently spoken to you) had always some *bon mot* or ill-natured tale to tell, so as to render him

a welcome addition in the eyes of Louis XV., who, however, was far from being partial to him. The king said to me one day, "Whenever the duc d'Ayen goes to heaven, I am afraid he will forget where he is, and begin lancing his epigrams and sarcasms as he does here;" and another time he said, "Ill-nature comes so natural to him, that even when by chance he catches a view of his own person in a mirror, the reflection displeases him, and calls forth satires and spiteful remarks against his very self." The following anecdote he related to us as one of the pranks of his youthful days.

Being with his regiment in a garrison town, his father compelled him to take his meals with an old lady, who, besides being a great devotee, was very cross and ill-natured, and so parsimonious, that her unfortunate guest generally rose from table more famished than he sat down. "I was musing," pursued the duc d'Ayen, "upon the best means of punishing her for this treatment, when accident revealed to me the name of her confessor. All at once the idea occurred to me of making the holy man the innocent accomplice and instrument of my vengeance. I hastened to the church, and placed myself in a confessional. The abbé questioned me; I stated my name and place of abode, recapitulated a long string of peccadillos, among the most enormous of which was the confession of having eaten meat during the past Lent.

"'How!' exclaimed my confessor, 'how, my son, said you not that you lodged and boarded at the house of madame de Serneuiel?'

"'I did, reverend father.'

"'So pious a person,' returned the priest, 'would hardly commit herself, or sanction your committing so deadly a sin.'

"'Alas! holy father,' answered I, 'if you know her, you must also be acquainted with her extreme parsimony which leads her to supply her table with meat as being less expensive than fish.'

"'Peace, my son,' rejoined the abbé, 'accuse your-

self alone: in these sacred walls speak no ill of your neighbour.'

"I had, however, said sufficient to create in the mind of the ghostly director of consciences a suspicion, founded on his knowledge of the character of the person I had accused. The delinquent came the following day in her turn to confess. After a short account of a few hasty words and trifling slanders, the old lady was silent, having, as she thought, gone through the whole chapter of those sins it was possible one so zealous and pious could commit. The confessor, withheld by the solemn oath of secresy taken upon all information received in confession, durst not tax her with what he regarded the greatest sin; he, therefore, by indirect questions contrived to reach the passion of avarice, and then, without mentioning the source from which he derived his information, accused her of having served up meat instead of fish during Lent. I must leave it to your sympathetic imagination to picture the consternation and surprise with which my niggardly landlady heard this charge. In vain she protested her innocence, and accused her enemies of having vilely aspersed her; the priest attributing her desire of concealing it to a determination of persisting in such practices, sent her away without absolution. Full of rage and mortification, the indignant dame related to me, upon her return home, the particulars of what had occurred, reiterating her complaints of having been shamefully scandalized by some person; indeed, so fully had the impression been made on the mind of the abbé, that it was very long ere she could recover his good opinion. This trick," added the duc d'Ayen, terminating his recital, "was one of the very best I remember taking a share in."

The king was highly amused with this recital, and laughed immoderately at the duke's mode of revenge.

In the excess of his good humour, Louis XV. related to us several traits in the character and life of his father, who, although one of the most estimable of princes,

had several peculiarities and habits, amusing enough in mere description, but to which the dauphiness yielded a very forced and reluctant consent; respect for the memory of so illustrious an individual, forbids my repeating the particulars to which I allude. Afterwards the king enquired whether I knew anything of the chevalier d'Eon; upon my replying in the negative, he related to me the history of this extraordinary personage, whose sex is still a matter of curious discussion, and who, at once a skilful plenipotentiary and brave soldier, was, at the time I am speaking of, banished from France, apparently in disgrace, although in secret he had still the favour and friendship of the monarch.

This regard, concealed beneath an assumed displeasure, was one of the most singular and unaccountable occurrences of the reign of Louis XV., and would of itself go far to prove the inconceivable weakness of that prince's character. M. d'Eon was a zealous and persevering minister, who had never been unsuccessful in any mission he undertook, and while his fidelity merited the utmost confidence on the part of his sovereign, he was disgraced and exiled for ever.

But even when his return to France was interdicted under the penalty of perpetual imprisonment, the king increased the pension of 4000 livres, which he had hitherto allowed him out of his privy purse, to 12,000, and even upon one occasion wrote him with his own hand the following words: "Be on your guard, my dear d'Eon, I have just signed the order for your arrest, at the instigation of my ministers; I pledge myself to protect you from their animosity, which, as this letter will testify, I take no share in."

The chevalier d'Eon, when in Russia, and enjoying a distinguished share of the favour and patronage of the czarina Elizabeth, received an extremely well written letter, without any kind of signature, containing a declaration of love; the writing appeared to him familiar, and upon comparing it with several papers in his portfolio, what was his surprise at recognising the

hand-writing of the czarina. Such an honour dazzled and confused him; but, recovering his self-possession, he hastened to reply; without presuming to lift the veil with which the fair writer had covered herself, he yet said sufficient to convince her she was known to him she honoured by her preference. To this came an answer from the same *incognita*, but in a style of increased tenderness. The chevalier replied in his very best manner, and ventured to plead for a meeting, which was granted, and fixed to take place in a building attached to the imperial palace; this put an end to all further doubt, and, buoyed up by the flattering hope of having captivated the affections of Elizabeth, the chevalier gave himself up to the most delightful dreams, which presented long vistas of court preferment, places, pensions, &c. till his very brain grew giddy. Attired with the most studious care, and decked in all the splendour of gold and embroidery, the happy d'Eon repaired to the place of rendezvous, but guess his mortification and disappointment, when, instead of finding the czarina, he was received with open arms by a French *femme de chambre*, who had recently entered the service of her imperial majesty; terrified at the vehemence and indignation of the chevalier, the *soubrette* confessed, with many blushes, that having been employed by the czarina (who was ignorant of the French language) to write any official notification to M. d'Eon, it had occurred to her, that she might continue the correspondence with advantage to herself. Of further particulars I am ignorant; but, pretty as was the weeping abigail, she could but ill repay poor M. d'Eon for the loss of the splendid picture his imagination had portrayed.

The chevalier never spoke of the affair, nor was it ever known until the French *femme de chambre* returned to her native country upon the death of Elizabeth.

CHAPTER XXVII.

My alarms—An *élève* of the *parc aux cerfs*—Comte Jean endeavours to direct the king's ideas—A supper at Trianon—Table talk—The king is seized with illness—His conversation with me—The joiner's daughter and the small-pox—My despair—Conduct of La Martinière the surgeon.

I HAD occasionally some unaccountable whims and caprices. Among other follies I took it into my head to become jealous of the duchesse de Cossé, under the idea that the duke would return to her, and that I should no longer possess his affections. Now the cause of this extravagant conduct was the firmness with which madame de Cossé refused all overtures to visit me, and I had really become so spoiled and petted, that I could not be brought to understand the reasonableness of the duchesse de Cossé refusing to sanction her rival by her presence.

You may perceive that I had not carried my heroic projects with regard to madame de Cossé into execution. Upon these occasions, the person most to be pitied was the duke, whom I made answerable for the dignified and virtuous conduct of his wife. My injustice drove him nearly to despair, and he used every kind and sensible argument to convince me of my error, as though it had been possible for one so headstrong and misguided as myself to listen to or comprehend the language of reason. I replied to his tender and beseeching epistles by every cutting and mortifying remark; in a word, all common sense appeared to have forsaken me. Our quarrel was strongly suspected by part of the court; but the extreme prudence and forbearance of M. de Cossé prevented their suppositions from ever obtaining any confirmation.

But this was not the only subject I had for annoyance. On the one hand, my emissaries informed me that the king still continued to visit the baroness de New—k, although with every appearance of caution and mystery, by the assistance and connivance of the duc de Duras, who had given me his solemn promise never again to meddle with the affair. The gouvernante of the *parc aux cerfs* furnished me likewise with a long account of the many visits paid by his majesty to her establishment. The fact was, the king could not be satisfied without a continual variety, and this passion, which ultimately destroyed him, appeared to have come on only as he advanced in years. All these things created in my mind a state of extreme agitation and alarm, and, improbable as the thing appeared even to myself, there were moments when I trembled lest I should be supplanted either by the baroness or some fresh object of the king's caprice; and again a cold dread stole over me as I anticipated the probability of the health of Louis XV. falling a sacrifice to the irregularity of his life. It was well known throughout the chateau, that La Martinière, the king's surgeon, had strongly recommended a very temperate course of life, as essentially necessary to recruit his constitution, wasted by so many excesses, and had even gone so far as to recommend his no longer having a mistress; this the courtiers construed into a prohibition against his possessing a friend of any other sex than his own; for my own part, I experienced very slight apprehensions of being dismissed, for I well knew that Louis XV. reckoned too much on my society to permit my leaving the court, and if one, the more tender, part of our union were dissolved, etiquette could no longer object to my presence. Still the advice of La Martinière was far from giving me a reason for congratulation; but these minor grievances were soon to be swallowed up in one fatal catastrophe, by which the honours and pleasures of Versailles were for ever torn from me.

The *madame* of the *parc aux cerfs*, fearing that some

of the subordinate members of that establishment might bring me intimation of what was going on there without her cognizance, came one day to apprize me that his majesty had fallen desperately in love with a young orphan of high birth, whom chance had conducted within the walls of her haram; that to an extraordinary share of beauty, Julie (for that was the name of my rival) united the most insatiate ambition; her aims were directed to reducing the king into a state of the most absolute bondage, "and he," said madame, "bids fair to become all that the designing girl would have him."

Julie feigned the most violent love for her royal admirer, nay she did not hesitate to carry her language and caresses far beyond the strict rules of decency; her manners were those of one accustomed to the most polished society, whilst her expressions were peculiarly adapted to please one who, like the king, had a peculiar relish for every thing the reverse of decent or correct. His majesty either visited her daily or sent for her to the chateau. I heard likewise from M. d'Aiguillon, that the king had recently given orders that the three uncles and two brothers of Julie should be raised by rapid promotion to the highest military rank; at the same time the grand almoner informed me he had received his majesty's express command to appoint a cousin of the young lady's to the first vacant bishopric.

These various reports threw me into a train of painful and uneasy reflections. Louis XV. had never before bestowed such marks of favour upon any *élève* of the *parc aux cerfs*, and the intrigue had attained this height with the most inconceivable rapidity. Chamilly interrupted my meditations, by presenting himself with an account of his having been commissioned by his majesty to cause a most splendid suit of diamonds to be prepared for mademoiselle Julie, the king not considering any jewels at present to be seen in the hands of the first jewellers of Paris worthy her acceptance. By way of a finish to all this, I learned

that two ladies, one of whom was a duchess, had openly boasted at Versailles of their relationship to Julie. This was a more decided corroborative than all the rest. Courtiers of either sex are skilful judges of the shiftings of the wind of court favour, and I deemed it high time to summon my brother-in-law to my assistance, as well as to urge him to exert his utmost energies to support my tottering power.

My communication tormented comte Jean as much as it did me; he proposed several means of combating this rising inclination on the part of Louis XV. I assented to whatever he suggested, and we set to work with an eagerness, increased on my part by a species of gloomy presentiment, which subsequent events but too fatally confirmed. The maréchale de Mirepoix, who, from being on good terms with every person, was sure to be aware of all that was going on, spoke to me also of this rival, who was springing up in obscurity and retirement; and it was from the same source I learned what I have told you of the two ladies of the court. She advised me not to abandon myself to a blind confidence, and this opinion was strengthened when I related all I had gathered upon the subject.

"You may justly apprehend," said she, "that Julie may instil some of her bold and fearless nature into the king, and should she presume to put herself in competition with you, victory would in all probability incline to the side of the last comer;" and I felt but too truly that the maréchale spoke with truth.

A few days after this, the king being alone with me, comte Jean entered. After the usual salutations, he exclaimed, "I have just seen a most lovely creature."

"Who is she?" inquired his majesty, hastily.

"No high-born dame," answered comte Jean, "but the daughter of a cabinet-maker at Versailles; I think I never beheld such matchless beauty."

"Always excepting present company," replied the king.

"Assuredly," rejoined my brother-in-law, "but, sire,

the beauteous object of whom I speak is a nymph in grace, a sylph in airy lightness, and an angel in feature."

"Comte Jean seems deeply smitten indeed, madam," exclaimed Louis XV. turning towards me.

"Not I indeed," replied my brother-in-law, "my love making days are over."

"Oh! oh!" cried the king, smiling, "*fructus belli.*"

"What does your majesty say?" inquired I.

"Nay, let the comte explain," cried Louis XV.

"The king observed, my dear sister," answered comte Jean, "that ladies—but, in fact, I can neither explain the observation, nor was it intended for you—so let it rest."

He continued for some time to jest with comte Jean upon his supposed passion for the fair daughter of the cabinet-maker; and the king, whilst affecting the utmost indifference, took every pains to obtain the fullest particulars as to where this peerless beauty might be found.

When my brother-in-law and myself were alone, he said to me, "I played my part famously, did I not? how eagerly the bait was swallowed!"

"Explain yourself," said I.

"My good sister, what I have said respecting this perfection of loveliness is no fiction, neither have I at all exaggerated either her perfections or her beauty, and I trust by her aid we shall obliterate from the king's mind every recollection of the syren of the *parc aux cerfs.*"

"Heaven grant it," exclaimed I.

"My dear sister," replied comte Jean, "heaven has nothing to do with such things."

Alas! he was mistaken, and Providence only employed the present occasion as a means of causing us to be precipitated into the very abyss of ruin we had dug for others. On the following morning, Chamilly came to me to inquire whether it was my pleasure that the present scheme should be carried into execution.

"Yes, yes," answered I eagerly, "by all means, the

more we direct the inclinations of the king for the present, the better for him and for us likewise."

Armed with my consent, Chamilly dispatched to the unhappy girl that *madame*, whose skill in such delicate commissions had never been known to fail. Not that in the present instance any great bribes were requisite, but it was necessary to employ some agent whose specious reasoning and oily tongue should have power to vanquish the virtuous reluctance of the victim herself, as well as to obtain a promise of strict silence from her family. They were soon induced to listen to their artful temptress; and the daughter, dazzled by the glittering prospect held out to her, was induced to accompany *madame* back to Trianon, where the king was to sup, in company with the ducs d'Aiguillon and de Richelieu, the prince de Soubise, the ducs de Cossé, de Duras, and de Noailles, mesdames de Mirepoix, de Forcalquier, de Flavacourt, and myself; my brother-in-law and Chon were also of the party, although not among the number of those who sat down to supper. Their presence was merely to keep up my spirits, and with a view to divert me from dwelling on the presumed infidelity of the king.

We had promised ourselves a most delightful evening, and had all come with the expectation of finding considerable amusement in watching the countenances and conduct of those who were not aware of the real state of the game, whilst such as were admitted into my entire confidence, were sanguine in their hopes and expectations of employing the simple beauty of the maiden of Versailles to crush the aspiring views of my haughty rival of the *parc aux cerfs*. This was, indeed, the point at which I aimed, and my further intention was to request the king to portion off mademoiselle Julie, so that she might be ever removed from again crossing my path.

Meanwhile, by way of passing the tedious hours, I went to satisfy my curiosity respecting those charms of which comte Jean had spoken so highly. I found the object of so many conjectures possessed of an uncom-

mon share of beauty, set off, on the present occasion, by every aid that a splendid and elaborate toilette could impart; her features were perfect, her form tall and symmetrical, her hair was in the richest style of luxuriance; but by way of drawback to so many advantages, both her hands and feet were large and coarse. I had expected to have found her timid, yet exulting, but she seemed languid and dejected even to indisposition. I attributed the lassitude and heaviness which hung over her to some natural regrets for sacrificing some youthful passion at the shrine of ambition; but I was far from guessing the truth. Had I but suspected the real cause! but I contented myself with a silent scrutiny, and did not (as I should have done) question her on the subject, but passed on to the saloon, where the guests were already assembled. The evening passed away most delightfully; the maréchale de Mirepoix excelled herself in keeping up a continual flow of lively conversation. Never had messieurs de Cossé and de Richelieu appeared to equal advantage. The king laughed heartily at the many humorous tales told, and his gaiety was the more excited, from his believing that I was in utter ignorance of his infidelity. The champagne was passed freely round the table, till all was one burst of hilarious mirth. A thousand different topics were started, and dismissed only to give way to fresh subjects more piquant than the preceding.

The king, in a fit of good humour, began to relate his adventures with madame de Grammont; but here you must pardon me, my friend, for so entirely did his majesty give the reins to his inclination for a plain style of language, that, although excess of prudery formed no part of the character of any of the ladies assembled, we were compelled to sit with our eyes fixed upon our plate or glass, not daring to meet the glance of those near us. I have little doubt but that Louis XV. indulged himself to this extent by a kind of mental vow to settle the affair with his confessor at the earliest opportunity.

We were still at table when the clock struck two hours past midnight.

"Bless me! so late?" inquired the king.

"Indeed, sire," replied the maréchale de Mirepoix, "your agreeable society drives all recollection of time away."

"Then 'tis but fit I should furnish you all with memory enough to recollect what is necessary for your own health. Come, my friends, morning will soon call us to our different cares, so away to your pillows."

So saying, the king bade us a friendly farewell, and retired with the ducs de Duras and de Noailles. We remained after his majesty, and retiring into the great saloon, threw ourselves without any ceremony upon the different couches and ottomans.

"For my own part," said the prince de Soubise, "I shall not think of separating from so agreeable a party till daylight warns me hence."

"The first beams of morn will soon shine through these windows," replied M. d'Aiguillon.

"We can already perceive the brightest rays of Aurora reflected in the sparkling eyes around us," exclaimed M. de Cossé.

"A truce with your gallantry, gentlemen," replied madame de Mirepoix, "at my age I can only believe myself capable of reflecting the last rays of the setting sun."

"Hush!" interrupted madame de Forcalquier, "you forget we are at Versailles, where age is never thought of, but where, like our gracious sovereign, all are young."

"Come, ladies," said madame de Flavacourt, "let us retire; I, for one, plead guilty of being in need of repose."

"No, no!" replied the duc de Richelieu, "let us employ the remaining hours in pleasing and social converse, and with a tremulous voice he began that charming trio in *Selina and Azor*, "*Veillons mes sœurs.*" We joined chorus with him, and the echos of the palace of Louis XV. resounded with the mirthful

strain. This burst of noisy mirth did not last long, and we relapsed into increased taciturnity, spite of our endeavours to keep up a general conversation. We were all fatigued, though none but madame de Flavaçourt would confess the fact. Tired nature called loudly for repose, and we were each compelled to seek it in the different apartments assigned us. The duc d'Aiguillon alone was compelled, by the duties of his office, to return to Versailles.

Upon entering my chamber I found my brother-in-law there, in the most violent fit of ill humour, that the king (who was in fact ignorant of his being at Trianon) had not invited him to supper. As I have before told you, comte Jean was no favourite with his majesty, and as I had displayed no wish for his company, Louis XV. had gladly profited by my indifference to omit him upon the present occasion. I endeavoured to justify the king, without succeeding, however, in appeasing comte Jean, who very unceremoniously consigned us all to the care and company of a certain old gentleman, whose territory is supposed to lie beneath "the round globe which we inhabit."

"I have to thank you," replied I, "for a very flattering mode of saying 'good night.'"

"Perhaps," answered comte Jean roughly, "you would prefer ——"

"Nothing from your lips if you please, my polite brother," cried I, interrupting him, "nothing you will say in your present humour can be at all to my taste."

Chon interfered between us, and effected a reconciliation, which I was the more willing to listen to, that I might enjoy that sleep my weary eye-lids craved for. Scarcely was my head on my pillow, than I fell into a profound sleep: could I but have anticipated to what I should awake! It was eleven o'clock on the following morning when an immense noise of some person entering my chamber, aroused me from the sweet slumbers I was still buried in. Vexed at the disturbance, I inquired, in a peevish tone, "Who is there?"

"'Tis I, my sister," replied Chon, "M. de Chamilly is here, anxious to speak with you upon a matter of great importance."

Chamilly, who was close behind mademoiselle du Barri, begged to be admitted.

"What is the matter, Chamilly?" cried I, "and what do you want? Is mademoiselle Julie to set off into the country immediately?"

"Alas! madam," replied Chamilly, "his majesty is extremely ill."

These words completely roused me, and raising myself on my arm, I eagerly repeated,

"Ill! of what does he complain?"

"Of general and universal pain and suffering," replied Chamilly.

"And the female who was here last night, how is she?"

"Nearly as bad, madam; she arose this morning complaining of illness and languor, which increased so rapidly, that she was compelled to be carried to one of the nearest beds, where she now is."

All this tormented me to the greatest degree, and I dismissed Chamilly for the purpose of rising, although I had no distinct idea of what it would be most desirable to say or do. My sister-in-law, with more self-possession, suggested the propriety of summoning Borden, my physician; a proposal which I at once concurred in, more especially when she informed me, that La Martinière was already sent for, and hourly expected.

"I trust," said I, "that Bouvart knows nothing of this, for I neither approve of him as a man or a doctor."

The fact was, I should have trembled for my own power, had both Bouvart and La Martinière got the king into their hands. With La Martinière I knew very well I was no favourite; yet it was impossible to prevent his attendance; the king would never have fancied a prescription in which he did not concur.

Meanwhile I proceeded with my toilette as rapidly

as possible, that I might, by visiting the king, satisfy myself of the nature of his malady. Ere I had finished dressing, my brother-in-law, who had likewise been aroused by the mention of his majesty's illness, entered my chamber with a gloomy look; he already saw the greatness of the danger which threatened us, he had entirely forgotten our quarrel of the preceding evening, but his temper was by no means improved by the present state of things. We had no need of explaining ourselves by words, and he continued walking up and down the room with his arms folded and his eyes fixed on the floor, till we were joined by the maréchale de Mirepoix and the comtesse de Forcalquier. Madame de Flavacourt had taken her departure at an early hour, either ignorant of what had occurred, or with the intention of being prepared for whatever might happen.

As yet, it was but little in the power of any person to predict the coming blow. "The king is ill," said each of us as we met. "The king is ill," was the morning salutation of the ducs de Richelieu, de Noailles, de Duras, and de Cossé. The prince de Soubise had followed the example of madame de Flavacourt, and had quitted Trianon; it seemed as though the hour for defections were already arrived. A summons now arrived from his majesty, who wished to see me. I lost not a moment in repairing to his apartment, where I found him in bed, apparently in much pain and uneasiness. He received me tenderly, took my hands in his, and kissed them; then exclaimed,

"I feel more indisposed than I can describe, a weight seems pressing on my chest, and universal languor appears to chain my faculties both of body and mind. I should like to see La Martinière."

"And would you not likewise wish to have the advice of Bordeu?"

"Yes," said he, "let both come, they are both clever men, and I have full confidence in their skill. But do you imagine that my present illness will be of a serious nature?

"By no means, sire," returned I, "merely temporary, I trust and believe."

"Perhaps I took more wine than agreed with me last evening; but where is the maréchale?"

"In my chamber with madame de Forcalquier."

"And the prince de Soubise?"

"He has taken flight," replied I, laughing.

"I suppose so," returned Louis XV., "he could not bear a long absence from Paris; company he must have."

"In that respect he resembles you, sire, for you generally consider company as a necessary good."

He smiled, and then closing his eyes remained for some minutes silent and motionless; after a while he said,

"My head is very heavy, so farewell, my sweet friend, I will endeavour to get some sleep."

"Sleep, sire!" said I, "and may it prove as healthful and refreshing as I pray it may."

So saying, I glided out of the room and returned to my friends. I found madame de Mirepoix and the duc de Cossé waiting for me in the anteroom.

"How is the king?" inquired they both in a breath.

"Better than I expected," I replied, "but he is desirous of sleeping?"

"So much the worse," observed the duc de Cossé; "I should have thought better of his case had he been more wakeful."

"Are you aware of the most imperative step for you to take?" inquired the maréchale de Mirepoix.

"No," said I, "what is it?"

"To keep his majesty at Trianon," replied she; "it will be far better for you that the present illness should take its course at Trianon rather than at Versailles."

"I second that advice," cried the duc de Richelieu, who just then entered the room; "yes, yes, as madame de Mirepoix wisely observes, this is the place for the king to be ill in."

"But," exclaimed I, "must we not be guided by the physicians' advice?"

"Do you make sure of Bordeu," said the duke, "and I will speak to La Martinière."

M. de Cossé took me aside, and assured me that I might rely upon him in life or death. When we had conversed together for some minutes, I besought of him to leave the place as early as possible; "Take madame de Forcalquier with you," said I, "your presence just now at Trianon would be too much commented upon."

He made some difficulties in obeying me, but I insisted and he went. After his departure, the duc de Richelieu, the maréchale, and myself walked together in the garden. Our walk was so directed that we could see through the colonnade every person who arrived up the avenue. We spoke but little, and an indescribable feeling of solemnity was mingled with the few words which passed, when, all at once, our attention was attracted by the sight of comte Jean, who rushed towards me in a state of phrenzy.

"Accursed day," cried he, stopping when he saw us, "that wretched girl from Versailles has brought the small-pox with her."

At this fatal news I heaved a deep sigh and fainted. I was carried under the portico, while the poor maréchale, scarcely more in her senses than myself, stood over me weeping like a child, while every endeavour was being made to restore me to life. Bordeu, who chanced to be at Versailles, arrived, and supposing it was on my account he had been summoned, hastened to my assistance. The duc de Richelieu and comte Jean informed him of all that had passed, upon which he requested to see the unfortunate female immediately; while he was conducted thither, I remained alone with the maréchale and Henriette, who had come to Trianon with my suite. My first impulse upon regaining the use of my senses, was to throw myself in the arms of the maréchale.

"What will become of me?" exclaimed I, weeping; "if the king should take this fatal malady, he will never survive it?"

"Let us hope for the best," answered madame de Mirepoix; "it would be encouraging grief to believe a misfortune, which we have at present no reason to suspect."

Comte Jean now rejoined us, accompanied by Bordeu and the duc de Richelieu; their countenances were gloomy and dejected. The miserable victim of ambition had the symptoms of the most malignant sort of small-pox; this was a finishing stroke to my previous alarms. However, comte Jean whispered in my ear, "Bordeu will arrange that the king shall remain here."

This assurance restored me to something like composure; but these hopes were speedily dissipated by the arrival of La Martinière.

"What is the matter?" inquired he, "is the king very ill?"

"That remains for you to decide;" replied the duc de Richelieu; "but however it may be, madame du Barri entreats of you not to think of removing the king to Versailles."

"And why so?" asked La Martinière, with his accustomed abruptness. "His majesty would be much better there than here."

"He can nowhere be better than at Trianon, monsieur," said I.

"That, madam," answered La Martinière, "is the only point upon which you must excuse my consulting you, unless, indeed, you are armed with a physician's diploma."

"Monsieur la Martinière," cried the duc de Richelieu, "you might employ more gentle language when speaking to a lady."

"Was I sent for hither," inquired the angry physician, "to go through a course of politeness?"

For my own part I felt the utmost dread, I scarcely knew of what. Bordeu, seeing my consternation, hastened to interfere, by saying,

"At any rate, monsieur la Martinière, you will not alarm the king needlessly."

"Nor lull him into a false security," answered the determined La Martinière. "But what is his malady? have you seen him, doctor Bordeu?"

"Not yet."

"Then why do we linger here? Your servant, ladies and gentlemen."

The medical men then departed, accompanied by the duc de Richelieu.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

La Martinière causes the king to be removed to Versailles—The young prophet appears again to madame du Barri—Prediction respecting cardinal de Richelieu—The joiner's daughter requests to see madame du Barri—Madame de Mirepoix and the 50,000 francs—A soirée in the salon of madame du Barri.

We continued for some minutes silently gazing on the retreating figures of La Martinière and his companions. "Come," said the maréchale, "let us return to the house;" saying which, she supported herself by the arm of comte Jean, whilst I mechanically followed her example, and sad and sorrowfully we bent our steps beneath the splendid colonnade which formed the entrance to the mansion.

When I reached my chamber, I found mademoiselle du Barri there, still ignorant of the alarming news I had just learned. She earnestly pressed me to return to bed, but this I refused; for my burning anxiety to learn every particular relative to the king would have prevented my sleeping. How different was the style of our present conversation to that of the preceding evening; no sound of gaiety was heard; hushed alike were the witty repartee, and the approving laugh which followed it. Now, we spoke but by fits and starts,

with eye and ear on the watch to catch the slightest sound, whilst the most trifling noise, or the opening of a door, made us start with trepidation and alarm. The time appeared to drag on to an interminable length.

At last the duc de Richelieu made his appearance.

"Well, my friends," said he, "the king is to be removed to Versailles, spite of your wishes, madam, spite of his own royal inclination, and against mine, likewise. La Martinière has thundered forth his edict, and poor Bordeu opposed him in vain. His majesty, who expresses a wish to remain here, stated his pleasure to La Martinière."

"'Sire,' answered the obstinate physician, 'it cannot be. You are too ill to be permitted to take your choice in the matter, and to the château at Versailles you must be removed.'

"'Your words imply my being dangerously indisposed,' said the king, inquiringly.

"'Your majesty is sufficiently ill to justify every precaution, and to require our best cares. You must return to the château; Trianon is not healthy; you will be much better at Versailles.'

"'Upon my word, doctor,' replied the king, 'your words are far from consoling; there must be danger, then, in my present sickness?'

"'There would be considerable danger were you to remain here, whilst it is very probable you may avoid any chance of it by following my directions with regard to an immediate removal to Versailles.'

"'I feel but little disposed for the journey,' said his majesty.

"'Still, your majesty must be removed, there is an absolute necessity for it, and I take all responsibility upon myself.'

"'What do you think of this determination, Bordeu?'

"'I think, sire, that you may be permitted to please yourself.'

" 'You hear that, La Martinière.'

" 'Yes, sire, and your majesty heard my opinion likewise.' Then turning towards Bordeu, 'Sir,' exclaimed he, 'I call upon you in my capacity of head physician to the king, to state your opinion in writing, and to abide by the consequences of it; you who are not one of his majesty's physicians.'

" At this direct appeal, your doctor, driven to extremities, adopted either the wise or cowardly resolution of maintaining a strict silence. The king, who was awaiting his reply with much impatience, perceiving his reluctance to speak, turned towards the duc de Duras, who was in attendance upon him, and said, 'Let them take me when and where my head physician advises.' "

At this recital I shed fresh tears. The duke afterwards told us that when La Martinière had quitted his majesty, he went to ascertain the condition of the wretched girl who had introduced all this uneasiness among us, and after having attentively examined her, he exclaimed, " She is past all hope, God only knows what the consequences may be." This gloomy prognostic added still more to my distress, and whilst those around me strove to communicate fresh hopes and confidence to my tortured mind, I remained in a state too depressed and dejected to admit one, even one ray of consolation.

The king was removed from Trianon, followed by all the persons belonging to his suite. The maréchale insisted upon deferring her departure till I quitted the place. We set out a few minutes after his majesty, and my coachman had orders to observe the same slow pace at which the royal carriage travelled. Scarcely had we reached Versailles, when mechanically directing my eyes towards the iron gate leading to the garden, a sudden paleness overspread my countenance, and a cry of terror escaped me, for, leaning against the gate in question, I perceived that singular being, who, after

having foretold my elevation, had engaged to present himself before me, when a sudden reverse was about to overtake me. This unexpected fulfilment of his promise threw me into the most cruel agitation, and I could not refrain from explaining the cause of my alarm to those who were with me. No sooner had I made myself understood than comte Jean stopped the carriage, and jumped out with the intention of questioning this mysterious visitor. We awaited with extreme impatience the return of my brother-in-law, but he came back alone, nor had he been able to discover the least trace of the object of his search. In vain had he employed the two footmen from behind the carriage to examine the different avenues by which he might have retired. Nothing could be heard of him, and I remained, more than ever, convinced that the entire fulfilment of the prophecy was at hand, and that the fatal hour would shortly strike, which would witness my fall from all my pomp and greatness. We continued our route slowly and silently; the maréchale accompanied me to the door of my apartment, where I bade her adieu, spite of her wish to remain with me; but even her society was now fatiguing to me, and I longed to be alone with merely my own family.

My two sisters-in-law, the wife of comte d'Hargicourt and that of my nephew, were speedily assembled to talk over with me the events of the last twelve hours. I threw myself upon my bed in a state of mental and bodily fatigue, impossible to describe. I strove in vain to collect my ideas, and arm myself for what I well saw was approaching, and the exact appearance of the singular predicter of my destiny prepared me for the rapid accomplishing of all that had been promised.

Louis XV., during this fatal illness, was placed under the care of Bordeu and Lemonnier. No particularly alarming symptoms appeared during this day, and we remained in a state of suspense more difficult to bear than even the most dreadful certainty. As soon as the

king felt himself sufficiently recovered from the fatigues of his removal he requested to see me. After bestowing on me the most gratifying marks of the sincerest attachment, he said,

" I am well punished, my dear countess, for my inconstancy towards you, but forgive me. I pray and believe that, however my fancy may wander, my heart is all your own."

" Is that quite true?" said I, smiling. " Have you not some reservations? does not a noble female in the *parc aux cerfs* come in for a share as well as the baroness de New—k?"

The king pressed my hand, and replied,

" You must not believe all those idle tales; I met the baroness by chance, and, for a time, I thought her pretty. As for the other, if she renders you in any way uneasy, let her be married at once, and sent where we need never see her again."

" This is, indeed, the language of sincerity," cried I, " and from this moment I shall have the fullest confidence in you."

The conversation was carried on for a long while in this strain. The physicians had made so light of the complaint, that the king believed his illness to be merely of a temporary nature, and his gaiety and good spirits returned almost to their natural height. He inquired after madame de Mirepoix, and whether my sisters-in-law were uneasy respecting his state of health. You may imagine that my reply was worded with all the caution necessary to keep him in profound ignorance as to his real condition. When I returned to my apartment I found Bordeu there, who appeared quite at a loss what to say respecting the king's malady, the symptoms still remained too uncertain to warrant any person in calling it the small-pox.

" And should it prove that horrible complaint?" inquired I.

" There would, in that case, be considerable danger," replied Bordeu, not without extreme embarrassment.

"Perhaps even to the extinction of all hope?" asked I.

"God alone can tell," returned Bordeu.

"I understand," interrupted I, quickly, "and, spite of the mystery with which you would fain conceal the extent of his majesty's danger, I know, and venture to assert, that you consider him already as dead."

"Have a care, madam," exclaimed Bordeu, "how you admit such an idea, and still more of proclaiming it. I pledge you my word that I do not consider the king is in danger; I have seen many cures equally extraordinary with his."

I shook my head in token of disbelief. I had uttered what I firmly supposed the truth, and the sight of my evil genius in the person of the prophet who had awaited my return to Versailles, turned the encouraging words of Bordeu into cold, heavy chill, which struck to my heart. Bordeu quitted me to resume his attendance upon the king. After him came the duc d'Aiguillon, whose features bore the visible marks of care and disquiet. He met me with the utmost tenderness and concern, asked of me the very smallest details of the disastrous events of the morning. I concealed nothing from him, and he listened to my recital with the most lively interest; and the account of the apparition of the wonderful being who seemed destined to follow me throughout my career, was not the least interesting part of our conversation.

"There are," said the duke, "many very extraordinary things in this life, reason questions them, philosophy laughs at them, and yet it is impossible to deny that there are various hidden causes, or sudden inspirations, which have the greatest effect upon our destiny. As a proof, I will relate to you the following circumstance. You are aware," continued the duke, "that the cardinal de Richelieu, the author of our good fortune, spite of the superiority of his mind, believed in judicial astrology. When his own immediate line became extinct by the unexpected death of his family and relatives, he wished to ascertain what would be

the fate of those children belonging to his sister, whom he had adopted as the successors of his name, arms, and fortune. The planets were consulted, and the answer received was, that two centuries from the day on which Providence had so highly elevated himself, the family, upon whom rested all his hopes of perpetuating his name, should fail entirely in its male descent. You see that the duc de Fronsac has only one child, an infant not many days old. I also have but one, and these two feeble branches seem but little calculated to falsify the prediction. Judge, my dear countess, how great must be my paternal anxiety!"

This relation on the part of the duc d'Aiguillon was but ill calculated to restore my drooping spirits, and although I had no reason for concluding that the astrologer had spoken prophetically to the grand cardinal, I was not the less inclined to believe, with increased confidence, the predictions uttered respecting myself by my inexplicable visitor of the morning. My ever kind friend, the duchesse d'Aiguillon, was not long ere she too made her appearance, with the view, and in the hope of consoling me. I could not resist her earnest endeavours to rouse me from my grief, and a grateful sense of her goodness, obliged me to deck my features with at least the semblance of cheerfulness. Every hour fresh accounts of the king's health were brought me, of a most encouraging nature; by these bulletins one might naturally suppose him rapidly recovering, and we all began to smile at our folly in having been so soon alarmed; in fact, my spirits rose in proportion as those about me appeared full of fresh confidence, and the mysterious visit of my evil genius gradually faded from my recollection.

In this manner the day passed away. I visited the king from time to time, and he, although evidently much oppressed and indisposed, conversed with me without any painful effort. His affection for me seemed to gain fresh strength as his bodily vigour declined, and the fervent attachment he expressed for me, at a

time when self might reasonably have been expected to hold possession of his mind, filled me with regret at not being able more fully to return so much tenderness. In the evening I wished to be alone, the maréchale de Mirepoix had sent to request a private interview, and I awaited her arrival in my chamber, while an immense concourse of visitors filled my salons. The king's danger was not yet sufficiently decided for the courtiers to abandon me, and the chances continued too strongly in my favour to warrant any one of them in withdrawing from me their usual attentions. Comte Jean, however, presented himself before me, spite of the orders I had given to exclude every person but the maréchale.

"My dear sister," cried he, as he entered, "Chamilly has just told me that he has received the royal command to have Julia married off without delay; now this is a piece of delicacy towards yourself on the part of the king for which you owe him many thanks. But I have another communication to make you, of a less pleasing nature. The unfortunate girl who has been left at Trianon, has called incessantly for you the whole of this day; she asserts that she has matters of importance to communicate to you."

Whatever surprise I experienced at this intelligence, it was impossible it could be otherwise than true, for was it likely that, at a time like the present, comte Jean would attempt to impose such a tale upon me.

"What would you have me do?" asked I of my brother-in-law.

"Hark ye, sister," replied he, "we are both of us in a very critical situation just now, and should spare no endeavour to extricate ourselves from it. Very possibly this girl may be in possession of facts more important than you at present conceive possible; the earnestness with which she perseveres in her desire of seeing you, and her repeated prayers to those around her to beg your attendance, proves that it is something more than the mere whim of a sick person, and

in your place, I should not hesitate to comply with her wishes."

"And how could we do so?" said I.

"To-night," returned he, "when all your guests have retired, and Versailles is in a manner deserted, I will fetch you; we have keys which open the various gates in the park, and walking through which, and the gardens, we can reach Trianon unobserved. No person will be aware of our excursion, and we shall return with the same caution with which we went. We will, after our visit, cause our clothes to be burnt, take a bath, and use every possible precaution to purify ourselves from all chance of infection. When that is done you may venture into the apartment of his majesty, if even that malady which at present hangs over him should not turn out to be the small-pox."

I thought but little of the consequences of our scheme, or of the personal danger I incurred, and I promised my brother-in-law that I would hold myself in readiness to accompany him. We then conversed together upon the state of the king, and, what you will have some difficulty in crediting, not one word escaped either of us relative to our future plans or prospects; still it was the point to which the thoughts of comte Jean must naturally have turned.

We were interrupted in our *tête-à-tête* by the arrival of the maréchale, whose exactitude I could not but admire. Comte Jean, having hastily paid his compliments, left us together.

"Well, my dear countess," said she, taking my hand with a friendly pressure, "and how goes on the dear invalid."

"Better, I hope," replied I, "and indeed, this illness, at first so alarming to me, seems rather calculated to allay my former fears and anxieties by affording the king calm and impartial reflection; the result of it is that my dreaded rival of the *parc aux cerfs* is dismissed."

"I am delighted to hear this," replied madame de

Mirepoix, "but, my dear soul, let me caution you against too implicitly trusting these deceitful appearances, to-morrow may destroy these flattering hopes, and the next day——"

"Indeed!" cried I, interrupting her, "the physicians answer for his recovery."

"And suppose they should chance to be mistaken," returned my cautious friend, "what then? But, my dear countess, my regard for you compels me to speak out, and to warn you of reposing in tranquillity when you ought to be acting. Do not deceive yourself, leave nothing to chance; and if you have any favour to ask of the king, lose no time in so doing while yet you have the opportunity."

"And what favour would you advise me to ask?" said I.

"You do not understand me, then?" exclaimed the maréchale, "I say that it is imperatively necessary for you to accept whatever the king may feel disposed to offer you as a future provision, and as affording you the means of passing the remainder of your days in ease and tranquillity. What would become of you in case of the worst? your numerous creditors would besiege you with a rapacity, still further excited by the support they would receive from court. You look at me with surprise because I speak the language of truth; be a reasonable creature I implore of you once in your life, and do not thus sacrifice the interests of your life to a romantic disregard of self."

I could not feel offended with the maréchale for addressing me thus, but I could not help fancying the moment was ill chosen, and unable to frame an answer to my mind, I remained silent. Mistaken as to the cause of my taciturnity, she continued,

"Come, I am well pleased to see you thus reflecting upon what I have said; but lose no time, strike the iron while it is hot. Do as I have recommended either to-night or early to-morrow; possibly, after that time it may be too late. May I venture also to re-

mind you of your friends, my dear countess. I am in great trouble just now, and I trust you will not refuse to obtain for me, from his majesty, a favour of which I stand in the utmost need—50,000 francs would come very seasonably; I have lost that sum at cards, and must pay it, but how I know not."

"Let not that distress you," said I, "for I can relieve you of that difficulty until the king's convalescence enables him to undertake the pleasing office of assisting your wishes. M. de Laborde has orders to honour all my drafts upon him, I will therefore draw for the sum you require." So saying, I hastily scrawled upon a little tumbled piece of paper those magic words, which had power to unlock the strong coffers of a court banker. The maréchale embraced me several times with the utmost vivacity.

"You are my guardian angel," cried she, "you save me from despair. But, tell me, my generous friend, do you think M. de Laborde will make any difficulty?"

"Why," said I, "should you suppose it possible he will do so?"

"Oh, merely on account of present circumstances."

"What circumstances?"

"The illness—no, I mean the indisposition of his majesty."

"He is an excellent man," said I, "and I doubt not but he will act nobly and honourably."

"If we could but procure his majesty's signature—"

"But that is quite impossible to-night."

"I know it is, and, therefore, I will tell you what I think of doing. Perhaps, if I were to set out for Paris immediately, I might be able to present this cheque before Laborde is acquainted with our misfortune. It is not late, so farewell, my dearest countess. I shall return to-morrow before you are up, but do not forget what I have said to you; and remember, that under any circumstances, the king should secure you a safe and ample independence. If his death finds you well provided for, you will still have a court, friends, rela-

tions, partisans, in a word, the means of gratifying every inclination. Be guided by me, and follow my advice."

And after this lesson of practical morality, the maréchale quitted me to hurry to Paris; and I, wearied and heartsick, flew to my crowded salons as a remedy against the gloomy ideas her conversation had given rise to.

On this evening my guests were more numerous and brilliant than usual, for no person entertaining the least suspicion of the king's danger, all vied with each other in evincing, by their presence, the desire they felt of expressing their regard for me. My friends, acquaintances, people whom I scarcely knew at all, were collected together in my drawing-rooms; this large assemblage of joyous and cheerful faces, drove away for a moment all the gloom which had hung over me. I even forgot the morning's visitor, and if the health of the king were at all alluded to, it was only *en passant*. It seemed a generally understood thing not to believe him seriously ill; in fact, to deny all possibility of such a thing being the case. Thus all went on as usual, scandal, slander, epigrams, jeux d'esprits, all the lively nonsense usually circulated upon such occasions, went round, and were laughed at and admired according to the tastes of those to whom they were addressed.

Could a stranger have seen us, so careless, thoughtless, and gay, he would have been far from suspecting that we were upon the eve of a catastrophe which must change the whole face of affairs in France. For my own part, my spirits rose to a height with the giddy crowd around me, and in levity and folly, I really believe I exceeded them.

At a late hour my rooms were at length forsaken, and I retired to my chamber, where, having dismissed my other attendants, I remained alone, (as was frequently my custom,) with my faithful Henriette, whom I caused to exchange my evening dress for a dark robe, which I covered with a large Spanish mantle I had

never before worn, and thus equipped, I waited the arrival of comte Jean. Henriette, surprised at these preparations, pressed me with so many questions, that at last I explained my whole purpose to her. The attached creature exerted all her eloquence to point out the dangers of the enterprise, which she implored of me to abandon, but I refused to listen to her remonstrances, and she ceased urging me further, only protesting she should await my return with the most lively impatience.

At length, comte Jean appeared, armed with a small sword-stick and pistols in his pocket, with every other precaution necessary for undertaking so perilous an adventure. We descended into the garden with many smiles at the singular figures we made, but no sooner were we in the open air, than the sight of the clear heavens sparkling with stars, the cool still night, the vast walks lined with statues, which resembled a troop of white phantoms, the gentle waving of the branches as the evening breeze stirred their leaves, with that feeling of awe and solemnity generally attendant upon the midnight hour, awoke in our minds ideas more suitable to our situation. We ceased speaking, and walked slowly down the walk past the basin of the dragon, in order, by crossing the park, to reach the château de Trianon.

Fortune favoured us, for we met only one guard in the park; this man having recognised us as we drew near, saluted us, and was about to retire, when my brother-in-law called him back and desired him to take our key, and open with it the nearest gates to the place which we wished to go to. He also commanded him to await our return. The soldier was accustomed to these nocturnal excursions even on the part of the most scrupulous and correct gentlemen and ladies of the court. He, therefore, assured us of his punctuality, and opened for us a great iron gate, which it would have cost my brother-in-law much trouble to have turned upon its hinges.

The nearer we approached to the end of our journey, the more fully did our minds become impressed with new and painful disquietudes. At length, we reached the place of our destination.

My brother-in-law desired he might be announced but said nothing of who I was. We were expected, for a Swiss belonging to the palace conducted us to a chamber at one end of the château, where, stretched on a bed of loathsome disease, was the creature who, but a few hours before, had been deemed worthy the embraces of a powerful monarch. Beside her was an elderly female, her mother, and an aged priest, who had been likewise summoned by the unfortunate girl, and her brother, a young man of about twenty-four years of age, with an eye of fire, and a frame of Herculean power. He was sitting with his back turned towards the door; the mother, half reclining on the bed, held in her hand a handkerchief steeped in her tears, while the ecclesiastic read prayers to them from a book which he held. A nurse, whom we had not before perceived, answered the call of the Swiss, and inquired of him what he wanted.

"I want nothing, myself," answered he, "but here is comte Jean du Barri with a lady from Versailles; they say they come at the request of mademoiselle Anne." We were now on the threshold of the door, and the nurse, crossing the chamber, spoke to the mother, who hastily rose, while the priest discontinued his prayers. The mother looked at us, then whispered some words to her daughter. The patient stirred in her bed, and the nurse returning to us, said to comte Jean that he might approach the bed of the invalid.

He advanced and I followed him, although the noisome effluvia with which the air was loaded produced a sickness I scarcely could surmount. The gloom of the place was still further increased by the dim light of two wax candles placed in a nook of the room.

The priest, having recognised my brother-in-law, and suspecting doubtless who I was, was preparing to

withdraw, but the sick girl made signs for him to remain. He obeyed, but removing to a distance, he took his place beside the young man, who, understanding only that strangers had arrived, rose from his seat and displayed his tall gigantic height to the fullest advantage.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Interview with the joiner's daughter—Consultation of the physicians respecting the king—The small-pox declares itself—The comte de Muy—The princesses—Extreme sensibility of madame de Mirepoix—The king is kept in ignorance of his real condition—The archbishop of Paris visits Versailles.

The gloomy and mysterious air scattered over the group which presented itself to our eyes filled us with desponding thoughts. There appeared throughout the party a kind of concentrated grief and silent despair which struck us with terror. We remained motionless in the same spot without any persons quitting their fixed attitude to offer us a seat. After some minutes of a deep silence, which I durst not interrupt any more than comte Jean, whose accustomed hardihood seemed effectually checked. The suffering girl raised herself in her bed, and in a hollow voice exclaimed,

"Comtesse du Barri, what brings you here?"

The sound of her hoarse and grating voice made me start, spite of myself.

"My poor child," answered I, tenderly, "I come to see you at your request."

"Yes, yes," replied she, bursting into a frightful fit of laughter, "I wished to see you to thank you for my dishonour, and for the perdition into which you have involved me."

"My daughter," said the priest, approaching her, "is this what you promised me?"

"And what did I promise to God when I vowed to hold myself chaste and spotless? Perjured wretch that I am, I have sold my honour for paltry gold; wheedled by the deceitful flattery of that man who stands before me, I joined his infamous companion in the path of guilt and shame. But the just vengeance of heaven has overtaken me, and I am rightly punished."

Whether this language were the result of a previously studied lesson I know not, but it was ill-calculated to raise my failing spirits.

"My child, my beloved child!" exclaimed the weeping mother, "fear not, God is merciful and will accept your sincere abhorrence of your fault. I have this day offered in your name a fine wax taper to your patroness, St. Anne, who will, no doubt, intercede for you."

"No, no!" replied the unhappy girl; "there is no longer any hope for me; and the torments I now suffer are but the preludes to those which I am doomed to endure everlastingly."

This singular scene almost convulsed me with agitation. I seized the arm of my brother-in-law with the intention of escaping from so miserable a spot; the invalid perceived my design and vehemently exclaimed,

"Stay, comtesse du Barri; I have not yet finished with you, I have not yet announced the full revenge I shall take for your share in my present hopeless condition; your infamous exaltation draws to a close, the same poison which is destroying me, circulates in the veins of him you have too long governed; but your reign is at an end. He will soon quit his earthly crown, and my hand strikes the blow which sends him hence. But still, dying a victim to a cruel and loathsome complaint, I go to my grave triumphing over my haughty rival, for I shall die the last possessor of the king's affections. Heavens! what agonies are

these ?" cried she; then, after a short silence, she continued, extending to me her arms hideous with the leprous blotches of her disgusting malady, "Yes, you have been my destruction; your accursed example led me to sell myself for the wages of infamy, and to the villainous artifices of the man who brought you here I owe all my sufferings. I am dying more young, more beautiful, more beloved than you; I am hurried to an untimely end. God of heaven! die! did I say die? I cannot, will not.—Mother, save your child!—Brother, help me, save me!"

"My daughter, my darling child!" cried the despairing mother, wringing her hands and weeping bitterly.

"My dearest sister Anne, what can I do for you?" inquired the young man, whose stern features were melted into mere womanish tenderness.

"Daughter," interrupted the priest, "God is good; he can and will forgive you if you heartily turn to him, with a sincere desire to atone for your fault."

All this took place in less time than it has taken in the recital. My brother-in-law seemed completely deprived of his usual self-possession by this burst of frightful raving; his feet appeared rooted to the floor of the chamber; his colour changed from white to red, and a cold perspiration covered his brows. For my own part, I was moved beyond description; but my faculties seemed spell-bound, and when I strove to speak, my tongue cleaved to my mouth.

The delirium of poor Anne continued for some time to find utterance, either by convulsive gesticulation, half-uttered expressions, and, occasionally, loud and vehement imprecations. At length, quite exhausted with her violence, which required all the efforts of her brother to subdue by positive force, she sunk into a state of insensibility. The priest, on his knees, implored in a loud voice the mercy of Providence for the king and all his subjects. Had any person conceived the design of working on my fears so far as to induce me

to abandon a life at court, they could not have succeeded more entirely than by exhibiting to me the scene I have been describing. Had not many contending ideas enabled me to bear up under all I saw and heard, my senses must have forsaken me; under common circumstances, the aspect of the brother alone would have terrified me exceedingly; and even now, I cannot recollect without a shudder, the looks of dark and sinister meaning he alternately directed to me and comte Jean. At this moment, the doctor, who had the charge of the unhappy girl, arrived. The warmth and eagerness of manner with which he addressed me directly he perceived my presence, might have proved to all around that I was not the hateful creature I had been described. This well-timed interruption restored me to the use of my faculties, and repulsing the well-meant attentions of my medical friend, I exclaimed, "Do not heed me, I conjure you; I am only temporarily indisposed. But hasten to that poor girl whose dangerous state requires all your care."

My brother-in-law, recovering himself by a strong effort, profited by the present opportunity to remove me into another apartment, the pure air of which contributed to cool my fevered brain; but my trembling limbs refused to support me, and it was necessary to apply strong restoratives ere I was sufficiently recovered to quit the fatal spot. At Trianon, as well as at Versailles, I was considered absolute mistress; those of the royal household, who were aware of my being at the former, earnestly solicited me to retire to the chamber I had occupied on the preceding night, but to this arrangement the comte and myself were equally opposed. A sedan chair was therefore procured, in which I was rapidly transported back to Versailles.

You may easily conceive in what a state I arrived there. My good Henriette was greatly alarmed, and immediately summoned Bordeu, who, not venturing to bleed me, contented himself with administering some cordials which revived me in some degree. But the

events of the last few hours seemed indelibly fixed in my mind; and I heard, almost with indifference, the bulletin issued respecting the state of the king's health during the fatal night which had just passed. One object alone engrossed my thoughts; my eyes seemed still to behold the miserable girl stretched on her dying bed, whose ravings of despair and threatening words yet rung in my ears, and produced a fresh chill of horror, as with painful tenacity my mind dwelt upon them to the utter exclusion of every other consideration. The unfortunate creature expired on the third day, a victim to the rapid progress of the most virulent species of small-pox. She died more calmly and resigned than I had seen her. For my own part, I freely pardoned her injustice towards myself, and sincerely forgive the priest if he, (as I have been told,) excited her bitterness against me.

The severe shock I had experienced might have terminated fatally for me, had not my thoughts been compelled to rouse themselves for the contemplation of the alarming prospect before me. It was more than four o'clock in the morning when I returned to the château, and at nine I rose again without having obtained the least repose. The king had inquired for me several times. I instantly went to him, and my languid frame, pale countenance, and heavy eyes, all which he took as the consequences of my concern for his indisposition, appeared greatly to affect him; and he sought to comfort me by the assurance of his being considerably better. This was far from being true, but he was far from suspecting the nature of the malady to which his frame was about to become a prey. The physicians had now pronounced their certainty on the subject, nor was it possible to make any mystery of it with me, who had seen Anne on her sick-bed.

In common with all who knew the real nature of the complaint, I sought to conceal it from the king, and in this deception the physicians themselves concurred. In the course of the morning a consultation

took place; when called upon for their opinion, each of them endeavoured to evade a direct answer, disguising the name of his majesty's disease under the appellation of a cutaneous eruption, chicken-pox, &c. &c., none daring to give it its true denomination. Bordeu and Lemonnier pursued this cautious plan, but La Martinière, who had first of all pronounced his decision on the subject, impatient of so much circumlocution on the part of those around him, could no longer repress his indignation.

" How is this, gentlemen !" exclaimed he, " is science at a stand still with you ? Surely you cannot be in any doubt on the subject of the king's illness. His majesty has the small-pox, with a complication of other diseases equally dangerous, and I look upon him as a dead man."

" Monsieur de la Martinière," cried the duc de Duras, who, in quality of his office of first gentleman of the bed-chamber, was present at this conference, " allow me to remind you that you are expressing yourself very imprudently."

" Duc de Duras," replied the abrupt La Martinière, " my business is not to flatter the king, but to tell him the truth with regard to his health. None of the medical gentlemen present can deny the truth of what I have asserted; they are all of my opinion, although I alone have the courage to act with that candour which my sense of honour dictates."

The unbroken silence preserved by those who heard this address, clearly proved the truth of all La Martinière advanced. The duc de Duras was but too fully convinced of the justice of his opinion.

" The king is then past all hope," repeated he, " and what remains to be done ?"

" To watch over him, and administer every aid and relief which art suggests," was the brief reply of La Martinière.

The different physicians, when separately questioned, hesitated no longer to express their concurrence in the

opinion that his majesty's case was entirely hopeless, unless, indeed, some crisis, which human foresight could not anticipate, should arise in his favour.

This opinion changed the moral face of the château. The duc de Duras, who had not previously suspected even the existence of danger, began to feel how weighty a burthen reposed on his shoulders; he recommended to the medical attendants the utmost caution and silence, pointing out, at the same time, all the ill consequences which might arise, were any imprudent or sudden explanation of his real malady made to the august sufferer. Unable to attend to everything himself, and not inclined to depend upon his son, whose natural propensity he was fully aware of, he recalled to his recollection that the comte de Muy, the sincere and attached friend of the dauphin, son to Louis XV., was then at Versailles. He immediately sought him out in the apartments he occupied in the château, and communicated to him the result of the consultation respecting the king's illness.

The comte de Muy was one of those rare characters reserved by Providence for the happiness of a state, when kings are wise enough to employ them. He thought not of personal interest or advantage, but dictated to the duke the precise line of conduct he himself would have pursued under similar circumstances.

"The first thing to be done," said he, "is to remember that the king is a Christian, and to conform in every respect to the customs of his predecessors. You are aware, my lord duke, that directly any member of the royal family is attacked by the small-pox, he ought immediately to receive extreme unction; you will, therefore, make the necessary arrangements, and apprize those whose duty it becomes to administer it."

"This is, indeed, an unpleasant commission," replied the duke; "to administer extreme unction to his majesty, is to announce to him cruelly and abruptly that his last hour has arrived, and to bid him prepare for death."

"The duty is nevertheless imperative," answered the comte du Muy, "and you incur no slight responsibility by neglecting it."

The consequence of this conversation was, that the duke sent off two couriers immediately, one to madame Louise, and the other to the archbishop of Paris. He also apprized the ministers of the result of the consultation which had taken place, whilst the comte de Muy took upon himself the painful office of acquainting the dauphin with the dangerous state of his grandfather. This young prince, whose first impulses were always amiable, immediately burst into tears; the dauphiness endeavoured to console him. But from that moment her royal highness appeared to show by her lofty and dignified bearing, her consciousness of the fresh importance she had necessarily acquired in the eyes of the nation. Meanwhile, the dauphin hastened to the sick room of his beloved relative, anxious to bestow upon him the cares and attentions of a son; but in the anteroom his progress was stopped by the duc de la Vrillière, who informed him, that the interests of the throne would not permit his royal highness to endanger his life by inhaling the contagious atmosphere of a room loaded with the venom of the small-pox. He adjured him, in the name of the king and his country, not to risk such fearful chances. The lords in attendance, who did not partake the heroism of the young prince, added their entreaties to those of *le petit saint*, and succeeded, at length, in prevailing upon him to return to his apartments, to the great joy of Marie Antoinette, who could not endure the prospect of being separated from her husband at so important a juncture.

No sooner had the princesses learned the danger of their august parent, than without an instant's hesitation, they hurried to him. I was in his chamber when they arrived; they saluted me with great gentleness and affability. When the king saw them, he inquired what had brought them thither at so unusual an hour.

"We are come to see you, my dearest father;" replied madame Adelaide; "we have heard of your indisposition, and, trifling as it is said to be, we could not rest without satisfying our anxious wish to know how you found yourself."

The other sisters expressed themselves in similar terms.

"It is all very well, my children," said Louis XV., with a pleasing smile, "and you are all three very excellent girls, but I would rather you should keep away from this close room; it can do you no good, and I promise to let you know if I find myself getting any worse."

After a slight resistance the princesses feigned an obedience to his will; but, in reality, they merely retired into an adjoining chamber, concealed from the sight of their parent, where they remained, until the moment when they undertook the charge of the patient. Their heroic devotion was the admiration of all France and Europe.

Much as their presence constrained me, I still kept my place beside the sick-bed of his majesty, who would not suffer me to leave him for a minute.

At an early hour the maréchale de Mirepoix returned, according to her promise. I met her in the corridor as I was passing along on my way to the king's apartment; her face was full of cheerful smiles.

"How greatly am I obliged to you for your prompt succour," said she, without even inquiring after my health or that of the king. "Do you know, I was but just in time; ten minutes later, and I should have been refused payment for your cheque. M. de Laborde, who was so devotedly your friend only yesterday, counted out to me the glittering coin I was so anxious to obtain. He even accompanied me to my carriage, when behold, just at the moment, when, with his hat in his hand, he was most gallantly bowing, and wishing me a pleasant journey, a courier arrived from Versailles bringing him the news of the king's illness. He looked

so overwhelmed with consternation and alarm, that I could not prevent myself from bursting into a hearty fit of laughter, nor has my gaiety forsaken me up to the present moment."

"You are very fortunate," said I, "to be enabled thus to preserve your good spirits."

"My dear creature, I would fain cheat time of some of his claims upon me. But now I think of it, what is the matter since I was here? is the king worse? and what is this I hear whispered abroad of the small-pox?"

"Alas, madam," answered I, much hurt at the insensibility she displayed, "we run but too great danger of losing our friend and benefactor for ever."

"Dear me, how very shocking! But what has he settled on you? what have you asked him for?"

"Nothing!" replied I, coolly.

"Nothing! very admirable, indeed; but, my good soul, these fine sentiments sometimes leave people to eat the bread of charity. So, then, you have not followed my advice. Once more, I repeat, lose not the present opportunity, and, in your place, I would set about securing my own interest without one instant's delay."

"That I could not do, madam," said I; "it is wholly foreign to my nature to take advantage of the weakness of a dying man."

"Dying man!" repeated the maréchale incredulously, "come, come, he is not dead yet; and whilst there is life there is hope; and I suppose you have carried your ideas of disinterestedness so far as to omit mentioning your friends, likewise. You will never have any worldly sense, I believe. My dear soul," said she, stooping down and whispering in my ear, "you are surrounded by a set of selfish wretches, who care nothing for you unless you can forward their interests."

"I see it, I know it," exclaimed I impatiently; "but though I beg my bread, I will not importune the king."

"As you please," cried madame de Mirepoix, "pray do not let me disturb your intentions. Silly woman

that you are, leave others to act the sublime and grand, your part should be that of a reasonable creature. Look at myself, suppose I had not seized the ball at the bound."

"You were born at Versailles," answered I, smiling in spite of myself.

"True, and I confess that with me the greatest of all sense is common sense, which produces that instinctive feeling of self-preservation implanted even in animals. But is the king indeed so very ill?"

"He is, indeed, dangerously ill."

"I am very sorry," answered she, "his majesty and myself were such old friends and companions; but things will now be very different, and we shall soon see the court filled with new faces, whilst you and I, my poor countess, may hide our diminished heads. A set of hungry wretches will drive us away from the princely banquet at which we have so long regaled, and scarcely will their eagerness leave us a few scattered crumbs—how dreadful! Yes, I repeat that for many reasons, we shall have just cause for regretting the late king."

"The *late* king!" exclaimed I. "His majesty is not yet dead, madame la maréchale."

"I know that, but he will die; and by speaking of the event as if it had already taken place, we prepare our minds to meet the blow with greater resignation when it does fall. I am much concerned, I can assure you; but let us quit the close confined air of this corridor, and go where we may breathe a purer atmosphere."

She took me by the arm with a greater familiarity than she had ever before assumed, and led the way to my chamber, where I found the duc de la Vrillière awaiting me, to request I would return to the king, who had asked for me more than once. This consummate hypocrite seized the present opportunity of renewing his assurances of an unalterable attachment to me, vowing an eternal friendship. I was weak enough to

believe him, and when I gave him my hand in token of reconciliation, I espied the maréchale standing behind him, making signals to me to distrust his professions.

I know not the reason of this conduct on the part of the duc de la Vrillière, but I can only suppose it originated in his considering the king in less danger than he was said to be; however, I suffered him to lead me to the chamber of the invalid. When Louis XV. saw me return, he inquired why I had quitted him? I replied, because I was fearful of wearying him; upon which he assured me, that he only felt easy and comfortable so long as I was with him.

"But, perhaps, there is some contagion in my present complaint?" exclaimed he, as though labouring under some painful idea.

"Certainly not," replied I; "it is but a temporary eruption of the skin, which will, no doubt, carry off the fever you have suffered with."

"I feared it was of a more dangerous nature," answered the king.

"You torment yourself needlessly, sire," said I; "why should you thus create phantoms for your own annoyance and alarm? tranquillize yourself, and leave the task of curing you to us."

I easily penetrated the real import of his words; he evidently suspected the truth, and was filled with the most cruel dread of having his suspicions confirmed. During the whole of this day he continued in the same state of uncertainty; the strictest watch was set around him that no imprudent confession should reveal to him the real nature of his situation. I continued sitting beside him in a state of great constraint, from the knowledge of my being closely observed by the princesses, of whose vicinity we durst not inform him, in the fear of exciting his fears still more.

The courier, who had been despatched to madame Louise, returned, bringing a letter from that princess to her sisters, under cover to madame Adelaide, in

which she implored of them not to suffer any consideration to prevent their immediately acquainting their father with the dangerous condition he was in. The duty, she added, was imperative, and the greatest calamity that could befall them, would be to see this dearly loved parent expire in a state of sinful indifference as to his spiritual welfare.

The august recluse, detached from all sublunary considerations, saw nothing but the glorious hereafter, where she would fain join company with all her beloved friends and connexions of this world.

The archbishop of Paris, M. de Beaumont, a prelate highly esteemed for his many excellent private qualities, but who had frequently embarrassed the king by his pertinacity, did not forget him on this occasion; for no sooner did the account of his majesty's illness reach him, than, although suffering with a most painful complaint, he hastened to Versailles, where his presence embarrassed every one, particularly the grand almoner, who, a better courtier than priest, was excessively careful never to give offence to any person, even though the king's salvation depended upon it; he, therefore, kept his apartment, giving it out that he was indisposed, and even took to his bed, the better to avoid any disagreeable or inconvenient request. The sight of the archbishop of Paris was far from being agreeable to him. This prelate went first in search of the princesses, who were not to be seen on account of their being with their father. A message was despatched to them, and mesdames Adelaide and Sophie, after having a long conference with him, by his advice, summoned the bishops of Meaux, Goss, and de Senlis, and held a species of council, in which it was unanimously agreed that nothing ought to prevent their entering upon an explanation with the king, and offering him spiritual succour.

Who was to undertake the delicate commission, became the next point to consider. M. de Roquelaire declined, not wishing, as he said, to infringe upon the

rights of the grand almoner, who was now at Versailles. M. de la Roche Aymon was therefore sent for, requesting his immediate attendance. Never did invitation arrive more *mal à propos*, or more cruelly disturb any manœuvring soul. However, to refuse was impossible, and the cardinal arrived, execrating the zeal of his reverend brother of Paris; who, after having explained the state of affairs to him, informed him that he was sent for for the purpose of discharging his office by preparing the king for confession.

The grand almoner replied, that the sacred duty by no means belonged to him; that his place at court was of a very different nature, and had nothing at all to do with directing the king's conscience. His majesty, he said, had a confessor, who ought to be sent for, and the very sight of him in the royal chamber would be sufficient to apprize the illustrious invalid of the motives which brought him thither. In a word, the grand almoner got rid of the affair, by saying, "that, as it was one of the utmost importance, it would be necessary to confer with his royal highness, the dauphin, respecting it."

CHAPTER XXX.

First proceedings of the *council*—The dauphin receives the prelates with great coolness—Situation of the archbishop of Paris—Richelieu evades the project for confessing the king—The friends of madame du Barri come forward—The English physician—The abbé Terray—Interview with the prince de Soubise—The prince and the courtiers—La Martinière informs the king of the true nature of his complaint—Consequences of this disclosure.

The different members of this *concile impromptu* declared themselves in favour of this advice, much to the

grief and chagrin of the princess Adelaide. She easily perceived by this proposition that the court would very shortly change masters, and could she hope to preserve the same influence during the reign of her nephew she had managed to obtain whilst her father held the sceptre? However, she made no opposition to the resolution of the prelates, who forthwith proceeded to the dauphin, who received them with considerable coolness. As yet, but ill-assured in the new part he had to play, the prince showed himself fearful and embarrassed. The dauphiness would willingly have advised him, but that prudence would not permit her to do, so that the dauphin, left wholly to himself, knew not on what to determine.

This was precisely what the grand almoner had hoped and expected, and he laughed in his sleeve at the useless trouble taken by the archbishop; and whilst he openly affected to promote his desires as much as was in his power, he secretly took measures to prevent their success. M. de Beaumont, who was of a most open and upright nature, was far from suspecting these intrigues; indeed, his simple and pious character but ill-qualified him for the corrupt and deceitful atmosphere of a court, especially such a one as Versailles. His situation now became one of difficulty; abandoned by the bishops and the grand almoner, disappointed in his hopes of finding a supporter in the dauphin, what could he do alone with the princesses, who, in their dread of causing an emotion, which might be fatal to their parent, knew not what to resolve upon. As a last resource, they summoned the abbé Mandaux, the king's confessor. The prelate excited his zeal in all its fervour, and this simple and obscure priest determined to undertake that which many more eminent personages had shrunk from attempting.

He therefore sought admittance into the chamber of the king, where he found the ducs de Duras and de Richelieu, to whom he communicated the mission upon which he was come.

At this declaration, the consequences of which he plainly foresaw, the duc de Duras hesitated to reply, scarcely knowing how to ward off a blow the responsibility of which must fall upon him alone. The duc de Richelieu, with greater self-command, extricated him from this difficulty.

"Sir," said he to the abbé, "your zeal is highly praiseworthy, but the duke and myself are aware of all that should be done upon such an occasion as the present; and although I freely admit that the sacred act you speak of is of an imperative nature, yet I would observe, that the king being still in ignorance of his fatal malady, neither your duties nor ours can begin, until the moment when the physicians shall have thought proper to reveal the whole truth to his majesty. This is a matter of form and etiquette to which all must submit who have any functions to fulfil in the château.

The duc de Duras could have hugged his colleague for this well-timed reply. The abbé Mandaux felt all the justness of the observation, yet with all the tenacity of his profession, he replied,

"That since it rested with the physicians to apprize the king of his being ill with the small-pox, they ought to be summoned and consulted as to the part to take."

At these words the duc de Duras slipped away from the group, and went himself in search of doctor Bordeu, whom he brought into an angle of the chamber out of sight of the king's bed. The duc de Duras having explained to him what the abbé had just been saying to them, as well as the desire he had manifested of preparing the king to receive the last sacraments, the doctor regarded the abbé fixedly for some instants, and then inquired in a severe tone,

"Whether he had promised any person to murder the king?"

This abrupt and alarming question made the priest change colour, whilst he asked for an explanation of such a singular charge.

"I say, sir," replied Bordeu, "that whoever speaks at present to his majesty of small-pox, confession, or extreme unction, will have to answer for his life."

"Do you, indeed, believe," asked the duc de Richelieu, "that the mention of these things would produce so fatal a result?"

"Most assuredly I do; and out of one hundred sick persons it would have the same effect upon sixty, perhaps eighty; indeed, I have known the shock produce instantaneous death. This I am willing to sign with my own blood if it be necessary, and my professional brother there will not dispute its truth."

At these words he made a sign for Lemonnier to advance, and after having explained to him the subject of conversation, begged of him to speak his opinion openly and candidly. Lemonnier was somewhat of a courtier, and one glance at the two noblemen before whom he stood, was sufficient to apprize him what opinion was expected from him. He, therefore, fully and unhesitatingly confirmed all that Bordeu had previously advanced.

Strong in these decisions, the duc de Duras expressed his regret to the confessor at being unable to accord his request. "But," added he, "you perceive the thing is impossible, unless to him who would become a regicide."

This terrible expression renewed the former terror of the abbé, who, satisfied with having shown his zeal, was, perhaps, not very sorry for having met with such insurmountable obstacles. He immediately returned to the apartment of madame Sophie, where the council was still assembled, and related the particulars of his visit; whilst the poor archbishop of Paris, thus foiled in every attempt, was compelled to leave Versailles wholly unsuccessful.

I heard all these things from the duc de Richelieu; he told me that nothing could have been more gratifying than the conduct of Bordeu and Lemonnier, and that I had every reason for feeling satisfied with the

conduct of all around me. "It is in the moment of peril," said he, "that we are best able to know our true friends."

"I see it," replied I; "and since our danger is a mutual one, ought we not to forget our old subjects of dispute?"

"For my own part, madam," returned he, "I do not remember that any ever existed; besides, is not my cause yours likewise? A new reign will place me completely in the background. The present king looks upon me as almost youthful; while, on the contrary, his grandson will consider me as a specimen of the days of Methuselah. The change of masters can be but to my disadvantage; let us, therefore, stand firmly together, that we may be the better enabled to resist the attacks of our enemies."

"Do you consider," inquired I, "that we may rely upon the firmness of the duc de Duras?"

"As safely as you may on mine," answered he, "so long as he is not attacked face to face; but if they once assail him with the arms of etiquette, he is a lost man, he will capitulate. It is unfortunate for him that I am not likely to be near him upon such an occasion."

Comte Jean, who never left me, then took up the conversation, and advised M. de Richelieu to leave him to himself as little as possible; it was, therefore, agreed that we should cause the duc de Duras to be constantly surrounded by persons of our party, who should keep those of our adversaries at a distance.

We had not yet lost all hope of seeing his majesty restored to health; nature so languid and powerless in the case of poor Anne, seemed inclined to make a salutary effort on the part of the king.

Every instant of this day and the next, that I did not spend by the sick-bed of Louis XV., were engrossed by most intimate friends, the ducs d'Aiguillon, de Cossé, &c. Mesdames de Mirepoix, de Forcalquier, de Valentinois, de l'Hôpital, de Montmorency, de Flavacourt,

and others. As yet, none of my party had abandoned me; the situation of affairs, was not, up to the present, sufficiently clear to warrant an entire defection. The good Geneviève Mathon, whom chance had conducted to Versailles during the last week, came to share with Henriette, my sisters-in-law, and my niece, the torments and uncertainties which distracted my mind. We were continually in a state of mortal alarm, dreading every instant to hear that the king was aware of his malady, and the danger which threatened him, and our fears but too well proclaimed our persuasion that such a moment would be the death-blow to all our hopes. It happened in this exigency, as it most commonly occurs in affairs of great importance, all our apprehensions had been directed towards the ecclesiastics, while we entirely overlooked the probability that the abrupt La Martinière might, in one instant, become the cause of our ruin. All this so entirely escaped us, that we took not the slightest precaution to prevent it.

No sooner was the news of the king's being attacked with small-pox publicly known, than a doctor Sulton, an English physician, the pretended professor of an infallible cure for this disease, presented himself at Versailles, and tendered his services. The poor man was simple enough to make his first application to those medical attendants already intrusted with the management of his majesty, but neither of them would give any attention to his professions of skill to overcome so fatal a malady. On the contrary, they treated him as a mere quack, and declared that they would never consent to confide the charge of their august patient to the hands of a stranger whatever he might be. Sulton returned to Paris, and obtaining an audience of the duc d'Orleans, related to him what had passed between himself and the king's physicians. The prince made it his business the following day to call upon the princesses, to whom he related the conversation he had held with doctor Sulton the preceding evening.

In their eagerness to avail themselves of every chance for promoting the recovery of their beloved parent, the princesses blamed the duke for having bestowed so little attention upon the Englishman, and conjured him to return to Paris, see Sulton, and bring him to Versailles on the following day. The duc d'Orleans acted in strict conformity with their wishes; and although but little satisfied with the replies made by Sulton to many of his questions relative to the measures he should pursue in his treatment of the king, he caused him to accompany him to Versailles, in order that the princesses might judge for themselves. The task of receiving him was undertaken by madame Adelaide. Sulton underwent a rigorous examination, and was offered an immense sum for the discovery of his secret, provided he would allow his remedy to be subjected to the scrutiny of some of the most celebrated chemists of the time. Sulton declared that the thing was impossible; in the first place, it was too late, the disease was too far advanced for the application of the remedy to possess that positive success it would have obtained in the earlier stage of the malady; in the next place, he could not of himself dispose of a secret which was the joint property of several members of his family.

Prayers, promises, entreaties, were alike uselessly employed to change the resolution of Sulton; the fact was evidently this, he knew himself to be a mere pretender to his art, for had he been certain of what he advanced, had he even conceived the most slender hopes of saving the life of the king, he would not have hesitated for a single instant to have done all he was asked.

This chance of safety was, therefore, at an end, and spite of the opinion I entertained of Sulton, I could not but feel sorry Bordeu had not given him a better reception when he first made known his professed ability to surmount this fatal disorder. However, I was careful not to express my dissatisfaction, for it was

but too important for me to avoid any dispute at a time when the support of my friends had become so essentially necessary to me.

In proportion as the king became worse, my credit also declined. Two orders, addressed to the comptroller-general and M. de Laborde, for money, met with no attention. The latter replied, with extreme politeness, that the 100,000 francs received by comte Jean a few days before the king was taken ill, and the 50,000 paid to madame de Mirepoix recently, must be a convincing proof, in my eyes, of his friendly intentions towards me, but that he had no money at present in his possession, the first he received should be at my disposal.

The abbé Terray acted with less ceremony, for he came himself to say, that, so long as the king remained ill he would pay no money without his majesty's signature, for which my brother-in-law might either ask or wait, till there no longer existed any occasion for such a precaution; and that, for his own part, he could not conceive how he could have consumed the enormous sums he had already drawn from the treasury.

This manner of speaking stung me to the quick.

"I find you," said I to him, "precisely the mean, contemptible wretch you were described to me; but you are premature. I am not yet an exile from court, and yet you seem already to have forgotten all you owe to me."

"I have a very good memory, madam," replied he, "and if you wish it, I can count upon my fingers the money you and your family have received of me. You will see——"

"What shall I see?" interrupted I, "unless, indeed, it be an amount of your regrets that such a sum was not left in your hands to be pillaged by your mistresses and their spurious offspring. Really, to hear you talk, any one would suppose you a Sully for integrity, and a Colbert in financial talent."

This vigorous reply staggered the selfish and coarse-

minded abbé, who easily perceived that he had carried matters too far, and had reckoned erroneously upon the feebleness and timidity of my natural disposition; he attempted to pacify me, but his cowardly insolence had exasperated me too highly to admit of any apology or peace-making.

"Have a care of what you do," said I, "or rather employ yourself in packing up whatever may belong to you, for you shall quit your post whatever may befall. In the event of the king's death you will certainly be turned out by his successor, and if he regain his health, he must then choose between you and me, there can be no medium. Henceforward, you may consider me only in the light of your mortal enemy." He wished to insist upon my hearing him, but I exclaimed, "Quit the room, I wish neither to see nor hear more of you."

The abbé saw that it was necessary to obey, he therefore bowed and retired. Two hours afterwards he sent me the sum which I had asked of him for my brother-in-law, accompanied by a most humble and contrite letter. Certainly, had I only listened to the inspiration of my heart, I should have sent back the money without touching it, and the epistle without reading it; but my heroism did not suit comte Jean, who chanced to be present. "Take it, take it," cried he; "the only way of punishing such a miscreant, is to break his purse-strings. He would, indeed, have the laugh on his side were your fit of anger to change into a fit of generosity; besides, this may be the last we shall ever see."

My brother-in-law and the comptroller general were an excellent pair. I treated the latter with silent contempt, not even replying to his letter; this was, however, my first and only stroke of vengeance, the disastrous events which followed did not permit me to pursue my plans for revenging this treacherous and contemptible conduct.

This quarrel, and the defection of the *worthy* abbé,

had the effect of rendering me much indisposed. My illness was attributed to an excess of sorrow for the dangerous condition of his majesty, nor did I contradict the report; for, in truth, I did most sincerely lament the malady with which the king was suffering, and my regrets arose far more from a feeling of gratitude and esteem, than any self-interested calculations. It was, therefore, in no very excellent humour that I saw the prince de Soubise enter my apartment. You may remember that this nobleman had quitted Trianon without saying one word to me, and since that period I had never seen him, although he had punctually made his inquiries after the king. When I perceived him, I could not help inquiring, with something of a sarcastic expression, whether his majesty had been pronounced convalescent? The prince comprehended the bitterness of the question.

"You are severe, madam," replied he, "yet I can solemnly affirm that circumstances, and not inclination, have kept me from your presence until now."

"May I believe you?" said I. "Are you quite sure you have not been imitating the policy of the abbé Terray?" Upon which I related the behaviour of the comptroller-general.

"Priest like," answered the prince.

"And is it not *courtier* like also?" inquired I.

"Perhaps it may," rejoined M. de Soubise; "for the two species of priest and courtier so nearly resemble each other in many particulars, as to have become well nigh amalgamated into one; but I claim your indulgence to make me an exception to the general rule, and to class me as a soldier and a man of honour; besides which, you are too lovely ever to be forgotten, and your past goodness to me will ensure you my services let what may occur."

"Well, then," said I, extending my hand, "as a reward for your candour, which I receive as genuine, I will request your forgiveness for any annoyance I may have caused you on your family's account; indeed,

I ought never to have resented any thing they have done. My presence here could not fail of being highly disagreeable to them; however, they will soon be relieved from that source of uneasiness, my stay draws rapidly to a close."

The prince de Soubise, with a ready grace and obliging manner, for which I shall ever remember him with a grateful recollection, endeavoured to dispel my apprehensions as to the state of the king; but whilst I acknowledged the kindness of his intention, my heart refused all comfort in a case, which I too well knew was utterly hopeless.

The state of affairs was now so manifest, that already an obsequious crowd besieged the doors of the dauphin, anxious to be first in the demonstration of their adoration of the rising sun; but the young prince, aided by the clear-minded advice of his august spouse, refused, with admirable prudence, to receive such premature homage; and since he was interdicted by the physicians from visiting the royal invalid, he confined himself within his apartments, admitting no person but a select few who possessed his confidence.

The disappointed satellites, frustrated in their endeavours to ingratiate themselves with the dauphin, turned their thoughts towards the comte de Provence, imagining that this prince, spite of his extreme youth, might have considerable influence over the mind of his brother, the dauphin. But this idea, however plausible, was by no means correct; it was too much the interest of ambitious and mercenary men to create a want of harmony between the royal pair, and up to the moment in which I am writing, no attempts have been made to produce a kinder and more fraternal feeling between two such near relatives.

I quitted the king as little as possible, watching with deep concern the progress of a malady, the nature of which was a secret to himself alone; for, in the dread of incurring my displeasure, no person had ventured to acquaint him with the awful fact. By the

aid of the grand almoner, I had triumphed over the wishes of the archbishop of Paris, and those of the confessor. The princes and princesses awaited the event; all was calm composure; when, all at once, the barriers I had been so carefully erecting were crushed beneath my feet, at one sudden and unexpected blow.

The king was by no means easy in his own mind with regard to his illness. The many messages that were continually whispered around him, the remedies administered, and, above all, the absence of his grandsons, all convinced him that something of a very unusual and alarming nature was progressing. His own feelings might, likewise, well assure him that he was attacked by an illness of no ordinary nature. Tortured beyond further bearing by the suggestions of his fancy, Louis XV. at length resolved to ascertain the truth, and, with this intent, closely questioned Bordeu and Lemonnier, who did their best to deceive him. Still, dissatisfied with their evasive replies, he watched an opportunity, when they were both absent, to desire La Martinière would at once explain the true malady with which he was then suffering. La Martinière, puzzled and confused, could only exclaim,

"I entreat of you, sire, not to fatigue yourself with conversation; remember how strongly you have been forbidden all exertion."

"I am no child, La Martinière," cried Louis XV., his cheeks glowing with increased fire; "and I insist upon being made acquainted with the precise nature of my present illness. You have always served me loyally and faithfully, and from you I expect to receive that candid statement every one about me seems bent upon concealing."

"Endeavour to get some sleep, sire," rejoined La Martinière, "and do not exhaust yourself by speaking at present."

"La Martinière, you irritate me beyond all endurance. If you love me, speak out, I conjure you, and tell me, frankly, the name of my complaint."

"Do you insist upon it, sire?"

"I do, my friend, I do."

"Then, sire, you have the small-pox; but be not alarmed, it is a disease as frequently cured as many others."

"The small-pox!" exclaimed the king, in a voice of horror; "have I indeed that fatal disease? and do you talk of curing it?

"Doubtless, sire; many die of it as well as other disorders, but we are sanguine in our hopes and expectations of saving your majesty."

The king made no reply, but turned heavily in his bed, and threw the coverlet over his face. A silence ensued, which lasted until the return of the physicians, when, finding they made no allusion to his condition, the king addressed them in a cool and offended tone.

"Why," said he, "have you concealed from me the fact of my having the small-pox?" This abrupt inquiry petrified them with astonishment, and unable to frame a proper reply, they stood speechless with alarm and apprehension. "Yes," resumed the king, "but for La Martinière, I should have died in ignorance of my danger. I know now the state in which I am, and before long, I shall be gathered to my forefathers."

All around him strove to combat this idea, and exerted their utmost endeavours to persuade the royal patient that his disorder had assumed the most favourable shape, and that not a shadow of danger was perceptible, but in vain; for the blow had fallen, and the hapless king, struck with a fatal presentiment of coming ill, turned a deaf ear to all they could advance.

Bordeu, deeply concerned for what had transpired, hastened to announce to the duc de Richelieu the turn which had taken place in the face of affairs. Nothing could exceed the rage with which the news was received. The duke hurried to the king's bed-side.

"Is it, indeed, true, sire," inquired he, "that your majesty doubts of your perfect restoration to health? May I presume to inquire whether any circumstance

has occurred to diminish your confidence in your medical attendants?"

"Duc de Richelieu," replied the king, looking as though he would search into his very soul, "I have the small-pox."

"Well," returned the duke, "and, as I understand, of a most favourable sort; perhaps, it might have been better that La Martinière had said nothing about it. However, it is a malady as readily subdued by art as any other; you must not allow yourself to feel any uneasiness respecting it, science has now so much improved in the treatment of this malady."

"I doubt not its ability to cure others, but me!—Indeed, duc de Richelieu, I would much rather face my old parliament than this inveterate disease."

"Your majesty's being able to jest is a good sign."

At this moment, ignorant of all that had taken place, I entered the room; for, in the general confusion, no person had informed me of it. The moment Louis XV. perceived me, he exclaimed in a hollow tone,

"Dearest countess, I have the small-pox."

At these words a cry of terror escaped me.

"Surely, sire," exclaimed I, "this is some wandering of your imagination, and your medical attendants are very wrong to permit you to indulge it for a minute."

"Peace!" returned Louis XV.; "you know not what you say. I have the small-pox, I repeat; and, thanks to La Martinière, I now know my real state."

I now perceived whose hand had dealt the blow, and seeing at once all the consequences of the disclosure, exclaimed in my anger, turning towards La Martinière, "You have achieved a noble work, indeed, sir; you could not restrain yourself within the bounds of prudence, and you see the state to which you have reduced his majesty."

La Martinière knew not what to reply; the king undertook his defence.

"Blame him not," said he; "but for him I should

have quitted this world like a heathen, without making my peace with an offended God."

At these words I fainted in the arms of doctor Bordeu, who, with the aid of my attendants, carried me to my chamber, and, at length, succeeded in restoring me. My family crowded around me, and sought to afford me that consolation they were in equal need of themselves.

Spite of the orders I had given to admit no person, the duc d'Aiguillon would insist upon seeing me. He exerted his best endeavours to persuade me to arm myself with courage, and, like a true and attached friend, appeared to lose sight of his own approaching fall from power in his ardent desire to serve me.

In this mournful occupation an hour passed away, and left my dejected companions sighing over the present, and anticipating even worse prospects than those now before them.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Terror of the king—A complication—Filial piety of the princesses—Last interview between madame du Barri and Louis XV.—Conversation with the maréchale de Mirepoix—The chancellor Maupeou—The fragment—comte Jean.

Perhaps no person ever entertained so great a dread of death as Louis XV., consequently no one required being more carefully prepared for the alarming intelligence so abruptly communicated by La Martinière, and which, in a manner, appeared to sign the king's death-warrant.

To every person who approached him the despairing monarch could utter only the fatal phrase, "I have the small-pox," which, in his lips, was tantamount to his

declaring himself a dead man. Alas! had his malady been confined to the small-pox, he might still have been spared to our prayers; but, unhappily, a complication of evils, which had long been lurking in his veins, burst forth with a violence which, united to his cruel complaint, bade defiance to surgical or medical skill.

Yet, spite of the terror with which the august sufferer contemplated his approaching end, he did not lose sight of the interests of the nation as vested in the person of the dauphin, whom he positively prohibited, as well as his other grandsons, from entering his chamber or even visiting the part of the château he occupied. After this he seemed to divest himself of all further care for sublunary things; no papers were brought for his inspection, nor did he ever more sign any official document.

The next request made by Louis XV. was for his daughters, who presented themselves bathed in tears, and vainly striving to repress that grief which burst forth in spite of all their endeavours. The king replied to their sobs, by saying, "My children, I have the small-pox; but weep not. These gentlemen (pointing towards the physicians) assure me they can cure me." But, while uttering this cheerful sentence, his eye caught the stern and iron countenance of La Martinière, whose look of cool disbelief seemed to deny the possibility of such an event.

With a view to divert her father from the gloom which all at once came over his features, the princess Adelaide informed him that she had a letter addressed to him by her sister, madame Louise.

"Let me hear it," cried the king; "it is, no doubt, some heavenly mission with which she is charged. But who knows?" He stopped, but it was easy to perceive that to the fear of death was added a dread of his well-being in another world. Madame Adelaide then read the letter with a low voice, while the attendants retired to a respectful distance. All eyes were directed

to the countenance of the king, in order to read there the nature of its contents; but already had the ravages of his fatal disease robbed his features of every expression, save that of pain and suffering.

The princesses now took their stations beside their parent, and established themselves as nurses, an office which, I can with truth affirm, they continued to fill unto the last with all the devotion of the purest filial piety.

On this same day Louis XV. caused me to be sent for. I ran to his bedside trembling with alarm. The various persons engaged in his apartment retired when they saw me, and we were left alone.

"My beloved friend," said the king, "I have the small-pox; I am ill, very ill."

"Nay, but sire," interrupted I, "you must not fancy things worse than they are; you will do well, depend upon it, and we shall yet pass many happy days together."

"Do you indeed think so?" returned Louis XV. "May heaven grant your prophecy be a correct one. But see the state in which I now am; give me your hand." He took my hand and made me feel the pustules with which his burning cheeks were covered. I know not what effect this touch of my hand might have produced, but the king in his turn patted my face, pushed back the curls which hung negligently over my brow; then, inclining me towards him, drew my head upon his pillow. I submitted to this whim with all the courage I could assume; I even went so far as to be upon the point of bestowing a gentle kiss upon his forehead. But, stopping me, with a mournful air, he said, "No, my lovely countess; I am no longer myself, but here is a miniature which has not undergone the same change as its unfortunate master."

I took the miniature, which I placed with respectful tenderness in my bosom, nor have I ever parted with it since.

This scene lasted for some minutes, after which I

was retiring, but the king called me back, seized my hand, which he tenderly kissed, and then whispered an affectionate "Adieu." These were the last words I ever heard from his lips.

Upon re-entering my apartments I found madame de Mirepoix awaiting me, to whom I related all that had taken place, expressing, at the same time, my earnest hope of being again summoned, ere long, to the presence of my friend and benefactor.

"Do not deceive yourself, my dear," said she; "depend upon it you have had your last interview; you should have employed it more profitably. His portrait! why, if I mistake not, you have *five* already. Why did you not carry about with you some deed of settlement ready for signature? he would have denied you nothing at such a moment, when you may rest assured he knew himself to be taking his last farewell."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed I. "And can you really suppose the king believed he spoke to me for the last time?"

"I have not the slightest doubt of it; I have known him for many a day. He remembers the scene of Metz, and looks upon you as forming the second edition of the poor duchesse de Chateauroux, who, by the by, was not equal to you in any respect."

I burst into a fit of tears, but not of regret for having allowed my late interview with the king to pass in so unprofitable a manner. However, the maréchale, misconceiving the cause of this burst of grief, exclaimed, "Come, come; it is too late now, and all your sorrow cannot recall the last half-hour. But, mademoiselle du Barri," continued she, "I advise you to commence your packing up at once, that when the grand move comes, you may not, in your hurry, leave anything behind you."

These remarks increased my affliction, but the maréchale had no intention of wounding my feelings, and, worldly-minded as she was, considered all that could be saved out of the wreck as the only subject worthy

attention. Meanwhile, comte Jean, with a gloomy and desponding air, continued silently with folded arms to pace the room, till all at once, as if suddenly struck by the arguments of madame de Mirepoix, he exclaimed, "The maréchale is right;" and abruptly quitted the apartment, as if to commence his own preparations.

Ere madame de Mirepoix had left me, and she remained till a late hour, the ducs d'Aiguillon and de Cossé arrived, who, although less experienced in their knowledge of the king's character, were yet fully of her opinion respecting my last visit to him.

Scarcely had these visitors withdrawn, than I was apprized that the chancellor of France desired to see me. He was admitted, and the first glance of the countenance of M. de Maupeou convinced me that our day of power was rapidly closing.

"Your servant, cousin," said he, seating himself without the smallest ceremony; "at what page of our history have we arrived?"

"By the unusual freedom and effrontery of your manner," answered I, "I should surmise that we have reached the word *finis*."

"Oh," replied the chancellor, "I crave your pardon for having omitted my best bow; but, my good cousin, my present visit is a friendly one, to advise you to burn your papers with as little delay as possible."

"Thank you for your considerate counsel," said I, coolly, "but I have no papers to destroy. I have neither mixed with any state intrigue, nor received a pension from the English government. Nothing will be found in my drawers but some unanswered billets-doux."

"Then as I can do nothing for you, my good cousin, oblige me by giving this paper to the duc d'Aiguillon."

"What is it?" inquired I, with much curiosity.

"Have you forgotten our mutual engagement to support each other, and not to quit the ministry until the other retired also? I have lately been compelled (from perceiving how deeply the duke was manœuvring

against me) to send him a copy of this agreement. Under other circumstances I might have availed myself of this writing, but now it matters not; the blow which dismisses me proceeds from other hands than his, and I am willing to leave him the consolation of remaining in power a few days after myself. Give him, then, this useless document; and now, farewell, my pretty cousin, let us take a last embrace."

Upon which the chancellor, presuming until the last upon our imaginary relationship, kissed my cheek, and having put into my hands the paper in question, retired with a profound bow.

This ironical leave-taking left me stupified with astonishment, and well I presaged my coming disgrace from the absurd mummery the chancellor had thought fit to play off.

Comte Jean, who had seen M. de Maupeou quit the house, entered my apartment to inquire the reason of his visit. Silent and dejected, I allowed my brother-in-law to take up the paper, which he read without any ceremony. "What is the meaning of this scrawl?" cried comte Jean, with one of his usual oaths; "upon my word our cousin is a fine fellow," continued he, crushing the paper between his fingers. "I'll engage that he still hopes to keep his place; however, one thing consoles me, and that is, that both he and his parliament will soon be sent to the right about."

Our conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Chamilly, who came to acquaint me that the king was sleeping, and did not wish to be again disturbed that night. Remembering my usual omnipotence in the château, I was about, like a true idiot, to prove to Chamilly that the king's interdict did not extend to me, when I was stopped in my purpose by the appearance of the duc d'Aiguillon; and as it was now nearly eleven o'clock at night, I could scarcely doubt his being the bearer of some extraordinary message.

CHAPTER XXXII.

The duc d'Aiguillon brings an order for the immediate departure of madame du Barri—The king's remarks recapitulated—The countess holds a privy council—Letter to madame de Mirepoix and the ducs de Cossé and d'Aiguillon—Night of departure—Ruel—Visit from madame de Forcalquier.

I SAID I did not expect the duc d'Aiguillon; and the grief which was spread over his features, and the large tears which stood in his eyes, persuaded me but too plainly that all hope was at an end.

"Is the king dead?" cried I, in a stifled voice.

"No, madam," replied he, "Louis XV. still lives, nor is it by any means certain that the misfortune you apprehend is in store for us."

"He sends me from him, then," exclaimed I, with a convulsive cry, "and my enemies have triumphed."

"His majesty is but of human nature, madam," replied the duke; "he feels himself dangerously ill, dreads the future, and believes that he owes his people a sort of reparation for past errors."

"How, my lord duke," interrupted I, "this grave language in your lips! but no matter. Inform me only at whose desire you state these melancholy facts; speak, I am prepared for your mission be it what it may."

"You shall hear everything, madam," replied the duke, leading me to an arm-chair. I seated myself; my sisters-in-law, my niece, and comte Jean stood around me, eagerly waiting the duke's communication. "A few hours after you had been removed from his chamber, the king inquired of the princess Adelaide whether it were generally known at Paris that he had the small-pox. The princess replied in the affirmative, adding,

" 'The archbishop of Paris was here twice during yesterday to inquire after you.'

" 'Yet I belong more properly to the diocese of Chartres,' returned the king, 'and surely M. de Fleury would not interest himself less about me than M. de Beaumont.'

" 'They are both truly anxious about you, my dearest father, and if you would only see them——'

" 'No, no,' answered Louis XV.; 'they must not be taken from the duties of their respective dioceses; besides, in case of need, I have my grand almoner.'

"Madame Adelaide did not venture to urge the matter further just then, and, after a short interval of silence, a message was brought from you, inquiring whether you could see the king, to which he himself replied, that he felt inclined to sleep, and would rather not see any person that night. I was in the chamber, and he very shortly called me to him, and said,

" 'Duc d'Aiguillon, I have the small-pox; and you are aware that there is a sort of etiquette in my family which enjoins my immediately discharging my duties as a christian.'

" 'Yes, sire, if the malady wore a serious aspect; but in your case——'

" 'May God grant,' replied he, 'that my disorder be not dangerous; however it may become so, if it is as yet harmless, and I would fain die as a believer rather than an infidel. I have been a great sinner, doubtless; but I have ever observed Lent with a most scrupulous exactitude. I have caused more than a hundred thousand masses to be said for the repose of unhappy souls; I have respected the clergy, and punished the authors of all impious works, so that I flatter myself I have not been a very bad christian.'

"I listened to his discourse with a heavy heart, yet I still strove to reassure the king respecting his health, of which, I assured him, there was not the slightest doubt.

" 'There is one sacrifice,' said the king, in a low and hurried tone, 'that my daughter Louise, her sisters,

and the clergy, will not be long in exacting from me in the name of etiquette. I recollect the scene of Metz, and it would be highly disagreeable to me to have it repeated at Versailles; let us, therefore, take our precautions in time to prevent it. Tell the duchesse d'Aiguillon that she will oblige me by taking the comtesse du Barri to pass two or three days with her at Ruel.'

"'How, sire!' exclaimed I, 'send your dearest friend from you at a time when you most require her cares?'

"'I do not send her away,' answered the king, with mournful tenderness, 'I but yield to present necessity; let her submit as she values my happiness, and say to her, that I hope and believe her absence will be very short.'"

The duke here ceased his recital, which fully confirmed all my previous anticipations. My female relatives sobbed aloud, while comte Jean, compressing his lips, endeavoured to assume that firmness he did not really possess. By a violent effort I forced myself to assume a sort of resignation.

"Am I required to depart immediately?" inquired I.

"No," said the duke; "to leave the château in the middle of the night would be to assume the air of a flight, we had better await the coming day; it will, besides, afford me time to apprize the duchess."

While the duc d'Aiguillon was thus gone to arrange for my departure, I requested to be left alone. My heart was oppressed, and I felt the need of venting my grief upon some friendly bosom. After a few moments, spent in collecting my thoughts, I addressed two letters, one to the maréchale de Mirepoix, and the other to the duc de Cossé; to the former I wrote an account of my retirement to Ruel, bewailed the sad turn my prospects had assumed, expressed my deep concern for the severe illness of my excellent friend and benefactor, begging of her to defend my character from all unjust attacks, and to allow me to be blamed for no faults but such as I had really been guilty of. I concluded with these words, "I set out at seven o'clock

to-morrow morning; the duchesse d'Aiguillon will conduct me to Ruel, where I shall remain until I am ordered elsewhere."

To the duke I merely sent a short account of my present prospects, hour of departure, &c. And my feelings somewhat relieved by the penning of these epistles, I threw myself upon a couch to await the morning. Upon awaking, I received the following note from the duchesse d'Aiguillon:

"Madame la comtesse,—I owe his majesty many thanks for the pleasing, yet mournful task he has allotted me. Your kindness to my family, independently of my private regard for you, gives you the surest claim of my best services during this afflicting period. Let me beseech of you not to despair, but cheerfully anticipate brighter days.

"I will call for you at seven o'clock, and if you approve of it, we will use my carriage. Ruel is entirely at your disposal and that of your family."

This note was truly characteristic of its amiable writer, who at court passed for a cold-hearted, frigid being, whilst, in reality, the warm feelings of her excellent heart were reserved for her chosen friends.

I have never admired those general lovers who profess to love every one, nor do I feel quite sure it is a very strong recommendation to say a person is beloved by all who know her. Read, now, a striking contrast to the short but sympathizing billet of madame d'Aiguillon, in the following heartless letter from the maréchale de Mirepoix, which was put into my hands as I was ascending the carriage.

"My lovely countess,—I am all astonishment! Can it be possible that you are to quit Versailles? You are right in saying you have been the friend of every one; and those who could speak ill of you are to be pitied for not having had better opportunities of understanding your real character. But fear not, the dauphiness is virtue personified, and the dauphin equally perfect. Every thing promises a peaceful and indul-

-gent reign, should we have the misfortune to lose his present majesty. Still there will always be a great void left at Versailles; as far as I am concerned, I have passed so much of my time with you, that I cannot imagine what I shall do with my evenings; it will cost me much of my age to alter habits and customs now so long fixed and settled, but such is life; nothing certain, nothing stable. We should imitate cats in our attachments, and rather identify ourselves with the house than the possessor of it. I trust you have secured an ample provision for the future; neglect not the present, to-morrow may come in vain for you.

"Be sure you let me know the spot to which you permanently retire, and I will endeavour to see you as frequently as my engagements will admit of. Adieu, *ma belle petite.*"

Spite of the bitterness of my feelings, this letter drew a smile to my lips; the allusion to cats which had escaped the maréchale, exactly applied to her own character, of which I had been warned before I became acquainted with her; but her protestations of warm and unutterable attachment had gained my confidence, and I allowed myself to be guided implicitly by her.

The duchesse d'Aiguillon was waiting for me while I perused the above letter; at length, with a sigh, I prepared to quit that palace of delights where I had reigned absolute mistress. I cast a mournful look around me, on those splendid walks, fountains, and statues, worthy the gardens of Armida, but where there reigned, at this early hour, a sort of gloomy silence; whilst, in that chamber where love had well nigh deified me and recognised me as queen of France, lay extended the monarch so lately my protector and friend.

It was the Wednesday of the fifth of May that I took my seat in the carriage of the duchesse d'Aiguillon, accompanied by my sister-in-law and the vicomtesse Adolphe, who would not forsake me. Bischi remained with madame d'Hargicourt, whose duties detained her

with the comtesse d'Artois. Her husband also remained at Versailles, while comte Jean and his son proceeded to Paris. I will not attempt to describe the emotions with which I quitted my magnificent suite of apartments, and traversed the halls and staircases already crowded by persons anxiously awaiting the first intimation of the king's decease. I was wrapped in my pelisse, and effectually eluded observation. It has been said that I left Versailles at four o'clock in the morning, but that was a mere invention on the part of my servants to baffle the curiosity of those who might have annoyed me by their presence.

We pursued our way in mournful reflection, whilst madame d'Aiguillon, with her wonted goodness, sought by every means to distract me from the dejection in which I was buried. Her husband, who remained with the king, engaged to write me a true account of all that transpired during my absence, and I shall very shortly present you with a specimen of the fidelity with which he performed his promise. The duchess did the honours of Ruel.

"Here," said she, "the great cardinal Richelieu loved to repose himself from the bustle and turmoil of a court."

"I think," answered I, "it would have been less a favourite with his eminence had it been selected for his abode on the eve of his disgrace."

Immediately upon my arrival I retired to bed, for fatigue had so completely overpowered me, that I fell into a heavy slumber, from which I did not awake till the following day; when I found the duchesse d'Aiguillon, my sister-in-law, Geneviève Mathon, and Henriette, seated by my bed: the sight of them was a cheering and gratifying proof of my not being as yet abandoned by all the world.

I arose, and we were just about to take our places at table, when madame de Forcalquier arrived. I must confess that her presence was an agreeable surprise to me; I was far from reckoning on her constancy in friendship, and her present conduct proved her

worthy of her excellent friend, madame Boucalt, whose steady attachment I had so frequently heard extolled. The sight of her imparted fresh courage to me, and I even resumed my usual high spirits, and in the sudden turn my ideas had taken, was childish enough to express my regrets for the loss of my downy and luxurious bed at Versailles, complaining of the woful difference between it and the one I had slept on at Ruel.

The duchesse d'Aiguillon, who must have pitied the puerility of such a remark, gently endeavoured to reconcile me to it by reminding me that both the marquise de Pompadour and the cardinal de Richelieu had reposed upon that very couch.

I endeavoured to return some sportive reply, but my thoughts had flown back to Versailles, and my momentary exhilaration was at an end. Tears rose to my eyes and choked my attempts at conversation; I therefore begged the duchess would excuse me, and retired to my apartment until I could compose myself; but the kind and attentive friend to whose hospitality I was then confided, needed no further mention of my hard couch, but caused the best bed Ruel contained to be prepared for me by the time I again pressed my pillow.

This same evening brought M. de Cossé, who could no longer repress his impatience to assure me of his entire devotion. He appeared, on this occasion, if possible, more tender and more respectful in his manner of evincing it than ever.

We supped together without form or ceremony, the party consisting of mesdames d'Aiguillon, de Forcalquier, and myself, mademoiselle du Barri, and the vicomtesse Adolphe; the prince de Soubise and the duc de Cossé. But the meal passed off dull and heavily; each of us seemed to abstain from conversation as though the slightest remark might come fraught with some painful allusion. On the following day I received the letter from the duc d'Aiguillon, which you will find in the following chapter.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

The duc d'Aiguillon's first letter—The maréchale de Mirepoix—A second letter from the duc d'Aiguillon—Numerous visitors.

"My much esteemed friend,—I promised you upon your departure to inform you of all that transpired, and although the task is a mournful one, I will do my best to acquit myself with zeal and sincerity, and each evening I will write you an exact detail of all that has occurred during the day. The king remains much as you left him, and you must know that already his medical attendants differ in their opinion respecting him—Lemonnier utterly despairing of his recovery, while Bordeu is most sanguine that he shall be enabled to restore him to health. La Martinière persists in his assertion that the attention of the king should be immediately directed to his spiritual concerns. The archbishop of Paris remains until called for in the antechamber, and the princesses never leave the bedside of their august parent.

"The king spoke with me concerning you for some time this morning, and I can assure you, you are the first object in his thoughts; he has begged of me never to forsake you, and has deigned to repose in me the enviable post of your future protector. 'I bequeath my beloved friend to your fidelity,' added the suffering prince. I took advantage of this opportunity to remark that I looked upon your quitting Versailles as too precipitate and premature a step. 'No, no,' replied the king, 'I have acted for the best; I have once been deceived as to my condition, and I would willingly prevent being again taken by surprise.' Tell my beloved and excellent countess how truly I love

her;' and hearing the prince de Soubise mention his design of supping at Ruel, he charged him to embrace you for him.

"The dauphin still remains secluded in his apartment, but I know that he keeps up a regular correspondence with madame Victoire, whose letters, after being immersed in vinegar, are carried to the comte de Muy, who fumigates them previously to allowing them to reach the hands of the dauphin.

"I am, &c., &c.

Versailles, May 5, 1774, nine o'clock, evening.

Upon awaking the following morning I again received news of the king, who was stated to have passed a good night, and even La Martinière seemed inclined to hope. As yet, then, there were no safe grounds for abandoning me, and about two o'clock in the afternoon I was favoured with a visit from madame de Mirepoix, who, running up to me, exclaimed with her usual vivacity,

"Oh, my dear creature, how I longed to see you!" and then leading me into another chamber, she added, "Do you know I quite missed you? As I wrote you, my time hung heavily on my hands. What in the world will become of me if I am compelled to resign the delightful hours granted to the envied few who are permitted the *entré* to the *petits appartements?* For you see, my dear, the dauphiness will be far from bestowing that honour upon me. I am too old to form one of her coterie, and I shall be laid aside like the rest of the antiquities of the château. By the way," continued the voluble maréchale, "there is already a great cabal in the château respecting the formation of a new ministry, in which, besides desiring lucrative posts for themselves, all are anxious to introduce their private friends; in the midst of so many absorbing interests you appear to be already forgotten, which, by the way, is no bad thing for you. Your best plan is to remain perfectly tranquil." Then rapidly passing to her most prevailing idea, this excellent friend pro-

ceeded to inquire what the king had bestowed on me as a parting present, "for," said she, "he would not certainly permit you to leave Versailles empty-handed."

"It is a point," replied I, "that neither his majesty nor myself once thought of."

"Then such an omission proves him a vile egotist, and you a prodigious simpleton," answered she; "and were I in your place, I would commission the duc d'Aiguillon to make a direct demand of a future provision for you; you really should see about this, and secure to yourself a noble establishment for yourself and your friends, who ought not to suffer for your overstrained delicacy. Look at the duc de Choiseul, who has kept a regular court at Chanteloup, and never wanted for a train of courtiers at it."

After this lesson of worldly wisdom, the excellent maréchale gave me a friendly kiss, returned to her carriage, and I saw her no more during my stay at Ruel.

The evening brought with it a second letter from the duc d'Aiguillon, it was as follows:—

"MADAM,—I hasten to acquaint you with the pleasing information of his majesty being considerably better; his strength appears to have returned, and he himself, in the consciousness of improving health, expressed aloud his regret for having been so hasty in advising your removal from him. He has continually repeated, 'How weak and selfish of me thus to afflict my dearest countess! would you not advise me, my friend, to request her immediate return?' Of course, my reply was in the affirmative. His majesty then put the same question to the duc de Richelieu, who answered, that in his opinion it was the best plan he could decide upon. The bulletin signed by the different physicians accompanies this: it leaves me nothing to add but to recommend your bearing with patience this temporary absence from court, to which you will ere long return, more idolized, more sought after, than ever. The duc de la Vrillière and the abbé Terray

present the assurance of their unbounded respect and devotion, &c., &c."

The duchess, my sister-in-law, and niece shared in joy at such gratifying intelligence, and the ensuing day brought a concourse of visitors to Ruel; indeed, any one might have supposed that fresh swarms of flatterers and courtiers had been created only to swell my number of humble and obsequious adorers. I bestowed on each unmeaning guest a smiling welcome, for indeed, my heart was too light and I felt too happy to be enabled to frown even upon those who, when the storm appeared near, had basely deserted me.

It was amusing enough to see with what zeal any person, whom I had previously recommended, was assisted by the various ministers in the pursuit of their object; the petit saint found himself all at once at leisure to pay his respects to me. He confirmed all the kind messages sent me by the king through the duc d'Aiguillon. Madame de Mirepoix, who had visited me the preceding evening, reserved her next call for the following day, but a few hours effected a cruel change in my fortune.

THE END OF VOL. III.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES,
Stamford-street.

